DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 546 UD 022 453

AUTHOR Dabney, Norma; Davis, Ave
TITLE An Ethnographic Description of a Successful Innercity School and Its Community. Final Report.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. Graduate School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jun 82
GRANT NIE-G-78-0228
NOTE 236p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Administrator Characteristics; Blacks; Classroom Environment; Community Attitudes; Community Characteristics; Disadvantaged Youth; Elementary Education; Equal Education; Ethnography; *Inner City; *Institutional Characteristics; Language Arts; Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; Reading Instruction; School Community Relationship; *School Effectiveness; *Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic report on a poor, black-populated, inner city school that is considered effective in an environment where others are failing. The study sought to provide a qualitative account that would allow identifying what factors make for school success. Positive community perceptions of the school and data on student achievement served as indicators of school effectiveness. The study involved interviews and detailed observations to describe the community, community/parent cooperation, school history, administration, personal interactions, and school/classroom activities. Special focus was directed at observing classes of high and of low achievers handled by Mrs. Gray, a teacher who was considered extremely effective, and whose high achieving pupils had demonstrated writing test scores that were equivalent to scores of comparable pupils in one of the richest communities in the United States. From the study, some factors believed to influence school success were identified: strong leadership; high expectations; emphasis on reading, writing, phonics, and spelling; careful evaluation; and parent involvement. It was suggested that Mrs. Gray's effectiveness as a teacher was due to her strong leadership; organizational and monitoring skills; ability to make students aware of lesson objectives; use of positive reinforcement; and democratic classroom practices. (Author/MJL)

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL INNERCITY SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY

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Final Report

Norma Dabney
Ave Davis

UD 022 453

University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June, 1982

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to Dr. Mary Hoover, who originally conceived of this study; and to Suzanne Clee, who did all of the original drawings.

We are indebted to the staff and students of the Harriet Tubman School, the students' parents, and the people who live and work in the triangle, as the Harriet Tubman community is called.

We are also grateful to the Metropolis School System for its assistance in carrying out this study; collegues and faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education; and, of course, the National Institute of Education, which provided the funds and support to make all of this possible.

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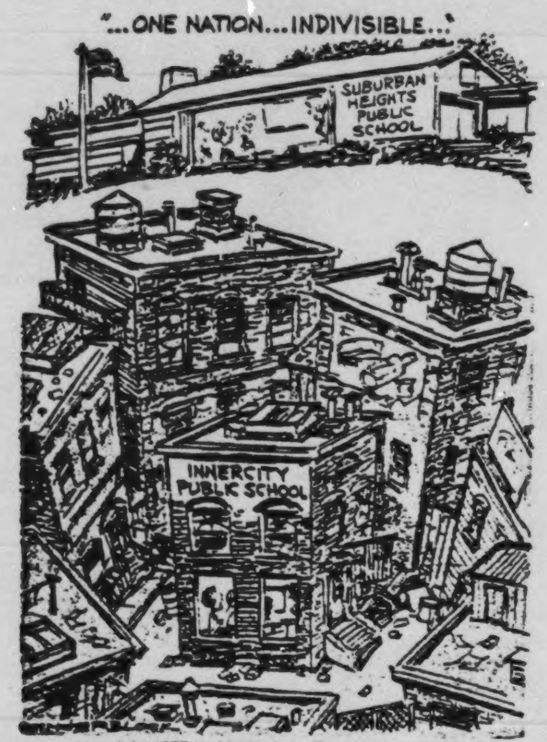
CHAPTER ONE

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY


"...ONE NATION...INDIVISIBLE..."
SUBURBAN HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL
INNERCITY PUBLIC SCHOOL

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(Educational Horizons, 1977-78, 56, #2:78).

> *It is difficult to let others see the full psychological meaning of caste segregation. It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing, and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiousity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within may become hysterical. They may scream and hurl themselves against the barriers, hardly realizing in their bewilderment that they are screaming in a vacuum unheard and that their antics may seem funny to those outside looking in. They may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by a horrified, implacable, and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own very existence. (Dubois, 1940:130-131)*

Literacy in America: Justice for All?

Members of minority groups now outnumber White students in all but six of the nation's big city school systems (Condition of Education, 1978:71)[1] and achievement levels in those cities run three, four, and even five years below the national averages (Sheils, et al., 1977:62). In overwhelmingly disproportionate numbers, low socioeconomic status (SES) minority children are failing to read as well as their White middle class counterparts (Clark, 1965; Coleman, et al., 1966; Silberman, 1970; Stein, 1971; Weber, 1971; Seitz, 1977; Condition of Education, 1978). In all age groups minority students score "appreciably below the national mean score" (Condition of Education, 1978:51).

The concern for the writing ability of America's children came to the forefront with the dissemination of the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1971 and 1974. This study reported that 17-year-olds declined in their command of writing mechanics between 1971 and 1974, and that the majority of children of all ages---9, 13, and 17---wrote "incoherent" and "unstructured" first drafts (1974:1-13).

The problems of the nation as a whole seem to be magnified where low SES Blacks are concerned, and writing achievement is no exception. The National Assessment of Educational Progress further reported that low SES Blacks lag behind their higher SES counterparts in writing achievement and that "the difference in their performance...increases at each successive age level." (1974:13)

This consistent inability to help a large percentage of low socioeconomic status minority students achieve literacy has created what Time magazine calls an "underclass" of Blacks and Hispanics.

The editors state that:

> ...Unemployed and lacking basic skills there is a hostility that rages within those [this underclass] who feel shut out of the American dream. ("Minority within a Minority," 1977:41)

---

[1] Although integration has progressed in the South and in the border states, racial segregation has increased in the Northeast since 1970. In all but the Southern states, most Black public school students attend predominatly Black schools (Condition of Education, 1978:71). Further statistics demonstrate that low socioeconomic conditions cluster around minority group familes. Figures show that in 1973, approximately 4½% of White children, as opposed to 28% of Black children, were from families earning less than $3,000 annually (America's Educationally Neglected, 1973:7-9).

The concern of parents and others regarding the illiteracy of low SES minority children and young adults in the United States has been reflected in coverage by the popular press and broadcast media. Yet professional journals have not expressed the same concern. An examination of topics in the major reading journals from 1970 to 1979 (Weintraub et al.) reveals a startling tendency to ignore the problem, perhaps in hopes that it will disappear, or to pooh-pooh the findings of the popular press as either superficial or muckraking. This statement, taken from a recent edition of the International Reading Associations's Journal of Reading, reflects this attitude:

> Although we still have a long way to go in the struggle to help all children attain their potential in reading, studies indicate that overall reading achievement in the primary grades is as good or better than ever before. (Miklos, 1980)

The Significance of Literacy for Blacks. In his classic book Dark Ghetto, Kenneth Clark reports that, since the time education for Blacks was permitted, Blacks have been concerned about the quality of education their children receive:

Shaken by the Harlem riots of 1935, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia appointed Black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier to study and report on the conditions in that huge New York ghetto. Frazier reported "flagrant deficiencies" in the predominantly Black schools there and said that conditions were "inflammatory." Clark says that "as the proportion of Blacks in the city schools increased over the years, it was obvious to everyone that the quality of education decreased" (Clark, 1965:118).

In 1955, twenty years after Frazier's report, there was a "full, impartial, and objective inquiry" into the effectiveness of the Black and Hispanic schools in New York. The study was conducted by the Public Education Association, in cooperation with the New York University Research Center for Human Relations. The study was triggered by a southern lawyer's defense of segregation in Virginia: The lawyer had asked the consultant from the NAACP how he could testify about the detrimental effects of segregated schools on children in Virginia when the schools in New York, the consultant's home state, were just as segregated. New York's Mayor Wagner was prompted by the NAACP to confront the superintendent of schools, who was outraged at the charges. Defacto segregation, defended the superintendent, was a geographic accident, and the children in Black schools "were receiving quality education and performing according to the level of their I.Q." (Clark, 1965:118). Citing the fact that I.Q. scores often reflect quality of teaching, reading level, etc., the NAACP rejected the superintendent's statements and suggested that low performance indicated ineffective educators. The study that followed revealing substandard teaching, facilities, and pupil performance confirmed the NAACP's claim (Public Education Association, 1955; cited in Clark, 1965: 118).

Many believe the situation has gotten worse since then. As the population in city schools became predominantly poor and Black, the problems of Harlem in 1955 became prevalent in innercity schools across the country. By 1971 in New York City, for example, the average child in eighty-five percent of the Black and Hispanic schools was functionally illiterate after eight years of schooling. (Stein, 1971)

> *The basic story... is one of inefficiency, inferiority, and massive deterioration. The further these students progress in school, the larger the proportion who are retarded and the greater is the discrepancy between their achievement and the achievement of other children in the city. (Clark 1965:119)*

> *"Newsfront: A New Tactic"*
>
> *In a desperate attempt to teach state legislators about the plight of Philadelphia's schools, the city school board in the spring of 1968 invited them to take a personal look at the classrooms. Shaken and dismayed after a day's excursion, one legislator said that the school he visited was terrible and that the principal admitted the children were not learning. The Vice President of the school board replied, "There are about sixty-seven other schools just like that. What do you think we have been talking about?" (Phi Delta Kappan, June, 1968:609)*

> *"Three Cheers for Critics of Education"*
>
> *... too many of our school systems are anxious to make peace with failure. If the nature of man is more to overcome than to buckle under to adversity, this attitude contradicts that nature... Those who have opted for silence have resigned themselves to the inability of man to solve his problems... During the past decade, the failures have become too obvious, the needs too urgent... (Philadelphia Tribune, 1979:4)*

Noah Webster, Horace Mann, and other nineteenth century educational reformers envisioned universal education as the key to political and social equality. Free and compulsory schooling became a reality in the twentieth century, but the dream of social and political equality still lies buried in the failure to provide equal educational opportunity (Hummel and Nagle, 1973:279-280).

> *Despite the achievements of Brown vs the Board of Education, today's public schools are failing to educate far too many of our Black children. Burdened with too little money for its expanded social mandate, run by overwhelmed, often ill-prepared and insensitive professionals and parents, increasingly plagued by violence, American public education threatens to strand present and future Black generations in second-class citizenship --- on the periphery of economic and political power. (Black Enterprise, 1981: 37)*

Black Americans have historically viewed education as the primary means of social and economic mobility (Higginbottom, 1979). Black teenage unemployment--- a statistic directly related to illiteracy--- stood at 38.3% officially in 1978. Realistically, it was closer to 60% (Coombs, 1978; "I Feel So Helpless, So Hopeless," 1980:23). As economist Bernard E. Anderson put it, Blacks are still traveling in the caboose of the train which represents the American economy (Black Enterprise, 1979:32). The presence of a Black, illiterate, unemployable "underclass" has become an acceptable part of the American scene, seemingly incapable of redress. ("Minority within a Minority," 1979:15)

Of course, the consequences of failing to educate a large segment of a population for productive employment present a drain on the American economy. As Gunnar Myrdal says:

> Even leaving aside the moral issue of justice and the more perfect realization of the American ideals of liberty and equality of opportunity, and speaking in cold financial terms, eradicating the rural and urban slums and giving the youth there an education for productive employment are probably the most profitable investments that can be made in America today. (Foreword to Clark, 1965:35)

Despite the dire consequences, the problem not only persists but festers:

> Despite the programs that raised so much hope, despite the brave talk by politicians about rescuing the cities, despite the thousands of

> success stories that seem to prove to the contrary, urban blacks have been slipping farther and farther behind whites...More ominously, black family income in the past decade actually fell relative to that of whites, from 60% of the white level in 1969 to 57% in 1979...Women now head 30% of all black households [and] the welfare rate of black women heading families is a devastating 50%... In so many large cities...the public school system is woefully inadequate. ("I Feel So Helpless, So Hopeless": Time 1980, 20-24)

The argument has been raised that it may be elitist to believe all people should acquire the ability to read and write (Asimov, 1980; "Teacher Can't Teach," 1980). Literacy is not required to perform certain jobs and, indeed, Americans on the whole are reading less and less, gleaning most information nowadays from the broadcast media (Asimov, 1980).

Yet, to essentially deny literacy to a large segment of a population consistently and continuously is to deny them access to a higher status in society, access to the American dream, and the "good life" as Aristotle[2] defines it--- to deny them access to a tool which will enable them to control their own lives (Freire, 1980).

In American life, education is considered the first prerequisite for success at any age. The success and psychological well-being of children depend, to a great extent, upon their ability to read and write since academic achievement depends on reading and writing proficiency. Children who lack basic skills may find themselves in the lower tracks in schools that practice homogeneous "ability" grouping--- a status that inevitably plagues them throughout their school careers. In the lower tracks they are labeled "slow learners," "lazy," or "learning disabled."

In secondary school, poor readers must choose between vocational or general courses of study since they do not qualify for the college preparatory curricula. Poor readers have a *higher dropout rate and a high school diploma is generally a prerequisite for social and economic mobility (Hummel and Nagle, 1973). Lack of reading proficiency hinders opportunities for career development, prevents people from moving into higher-paying, skilled, white-collar and professional occupations and into the higher-class status such jobs offer. In addition, reading is a tool that empowers one to learn independently throughout life.

---

[2] Aristotle believed that the glory of man is in his intellect; that the perfection of the intellect is the highest goal that one can achieve. The good life is a life so lived that a person accumulates successively in time all the things that satisfy his natural desires. On the biological level, we all need food, clothing, shelter, rest, play, and sensuous pleasure. Spiritually and intellectually, we all need a good society to live in, friendship and love, and knowledge and wisdom. Aristotle believed the good society should assure that all secure these natural desires. (emphasis mine. See "Mind at Large: Adler on Aristotle,"1979:6)

*The dropout rate in high school for Blacks is 55%. ("I Feel So Helpless, So Hopeless," 1980, 23)

Urban school systems have experimented with new methods, materials, and approaches hoping to reverse the reading failure of *low SES Black students. But, for the most part, the results of these* efforts have been discouraging, and illiteracy among Black people is coming to be viewed as a matter of course, an inevitable consequence of poverty and color.

Not surprisingly, many are puzzled by this failure to impart literacy and marketable skills to a large setment of any population in our great, rich country after years of trying (Stein, 1971:134).

> It should not escape our notice that the American penchant for hope, for tackling tasks and finding solutions, went out with our [Black people's] appearance on the center stage of this country's unending drama with us. (Coombs, 1978:35)

Educators have offered a myriad of rationales for the consistent and alarming failure of low SES minority children to learn to read proficiently. Indeed, most of the research that tackles the boondoggle of reading failure blames those who are not reading for their inability to learn (Hoover, 1978:757). But doesn't good pedagogical theory claim that the test of good teaching is how much the student has learned? Isn't it the task of the school to find out what methods work and use them?

Unfortunately, in teaching reading in innercity schools, much more time has been spent explaining why students fail.

Rationales for Failure

> *There are two conflicting points of view--one that pupils do not learn because they cannot; the other that they do not learn because they are not taught. The fact is that they are not learning. The problem is to see that they do. (Clark, 1965:139)*

A much more popular subject than what happens in innercity schools where students are achieving at and above the national norm has been what is the matter with low SES innercity children that causes them to read less proficiently than their White middle-class counterparts. A survey of social science research completed in 1970 revealed that 82% of the research on Black Americans was devoted to studies that interpreted the difficulties of Black Americans in terms of their own personal shortcomings (Caplan and Nelson, 1974; cited in Hoover, 1978). In over 100 workshops across the country, Mary Rhodes Hoover asked teachers why innercity children scored below the national norm on standardized reading tests (Hoover, 1978).[3] By and large, the major reasons given for this difference were of the "Blaming the Victim"-type ideology. The teachers said innercity children can't learn to read because:

> ---their I.Q.'s are low, showing minimal cognitive skills...
>
> ---they can't think abstractly, so we can teach them only what they can concretely memorize; we must therefore stay away from phonics... for these children.
>
> ---they can't hear. Their homes are so noisy that their auditory discrimination, so necessary for reading, is impared.
>
> ---they're culturally deprived.
>
> ---their parents don't care.
>
> ---they're poor. None of the poor can read... In fact, none of the world's poor can read.
>
> ---they're culturally different and their culture doesn't value reading. Their peers don't value it; their parents don't value it.
>
> ---their self-concepts are too low. We must first improve their self-concepts and then they can learn to read.
>
> ---they're not sitting next to Whites. Black children must be exposed to Whites before they will be motivated to learn how to read.
>
> ---they're being rushed. We must wait until they're ready.
>
> ---their language is different. We must teach them Standard English before they can learn to read it. (Hoover, 1978: 758)

Each excuse the teachers gave, Hoover says, was basically

> a reflection of the views of their mentors---the professors of education; the authors of journal articles, tests and textbooks; and the directors of the educational research industry. (1978:758)

---

[3] Research shows standardized reading tests are biased against poor and minority students (Hoover, Politzer and Taylor, 1975). But since there is no culture-free test, this researcher believes low income minority communities need to know how their students score on even biased tests for accountability purposes. (See also Hoover, 1978.)

This "Blame the Victim" research and theorizing has resulted in a shift of responsibility from the school to the students. Students are to blame; the school is excused. Yet each excuse the teachers gave has been proven to be unfounded (Hoover, 1978). Not only does blame-shifting offer us little in the way of a solution to the problem, it also, of even more devastating consequence, fosters a defeatist attitude on the part of those charged with teaching low SES Black children---an attitude that just about guarantees failure (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Clark, 1965: 127-129).

The Need to Study Successful Innercity Schools

Recent research shows the school can be the overwhelming variable in determining whether its students succeed or fail (New York State Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Clark, 1965; Weber, 1971; Hoover, 1978). For example, the New York State Office of Education Performance Review (1974) found one school in a low-SES Black neighborhood that had significantly higher student achievement in reading than another socio-culturally matched school, and they found that these differences in student performance could be attributed to factors under the school's control.

A few educators have begun to demand that successful innercity schools be studied so they can be modeled (Califano, 1978; New York Times, Jan. 1979, 1:1). Victoria Seitz (1977) concluded, after an exhaustive review of the literature describing the correlation of reading achievement and socioeconomic status, that "perhaps the most evident conclusion is that the quantity of research has not yielded a commensurate quality of satisfying answers" (38). She goes on to say that:

> Much of the research has been methodologically weak, although it has been widely publicized... More extensive examination of successful innercity schools is an area deserving greater attention. (emphasis mine:38)

Robert Merton gives us further rationale for studying successful innercity schools by saying in the conclusion of his essay on "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," that "whatever is, is possible."

> It is the successful experiment which is decisive and not the thousand-and-one failures which preceded it. More is learned from the single success than from the multiple failures. A single success proves it can be done. Therefore it is necessary only to learn what made it work. (Quoted in Silberman, 1970:95)

Since there are a growing number of innercity schools wherein the majority of students have progressed in their reading achievement and are approaching or have surpassed the national norm on standardized tests, there is ample proof that low-SES Black-attended innercity schools can be successful. As Merton says: "It is necessary only to learn what made [them] work."

Joseph Califano, the former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, urged the dissemination of information about the most "promising basic skills programs" to State and local authorities. He stated in his testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities:

> A demonstration effort in compensatory education is needed because there is no systematic Federal or State initiative designed to explore ways of improving practice in compensatory education---despite the substantial investment and persistent need in this area. Under the proposed demonstration effort, practitioners could learn how generic features of effective programs...can be adopted in ways congruent with local needs and choices. (1978:31)

And Ray Rist says:

> By now we have enough results from experimental teaching programs with children from these [low SES Black] backgrounds to know that with proper stimulation, these children can achieve as well as the average child, and that in these schools, too, the potentials for extraordinary accomplishment are there if facilitated by the school environment. (1973:x)

The purpose of this study is to provide an ethnographic perspective of phenomena that may affect the reading and writing achievement of students in a successful innercity school.[4]

What is an Ethnographic Perspective?

Although the term is relatively new to educational research, ethnographic research has been carried out for centuries. Among the first to use it were anthropologists who traveled to unfamiliar, distant lands and wanted to learn as much as possible about the way of life and values of the people who lived there. They spent extensive time---often years---at the research site, living with the people and getting to know them first-hand. In this way, they came to know what the participants in this foreign land both consciously and unconsciously knew about their culture. They also made a point of establishing a working relationship with an "informant," someone who could act as a sort of guide to keep them from making serious mistakes and to answer questions they could not answer independently by becoming intimately involved with the natives on a day-to-day basis. Even more importantly, this informant was someone with whom the researcher could establish a continuous dialogue to determine how he or she --- and other participants in the culture---perceive their world.

---

[4] The investigator is grateful to Dr. Mary Hoover who originally conceived of this study.

What these ethnographic researchers found out, they described in vivid detail; thus, those at home, who would probably never have the opportunity to visit this foreign culture, were able to acquire a clear, familiar understanding of it. The culture was then compared with others which were familiar to the anthropologist's colleagues, so that they could better understand it and other cultures.

The goal of ethnography is to get a society's "emic" perspective; thus, anthropologists deliberately entered the research site without preformulated hypotheses. They found that beginning with no hypotheses allowed them to be open to discovering whatever was important to learn about a foreign culture and less suseptible to having preconceived notions which might close their minds to new discoveries.

Although they struggled to keep an open mind, ethnographic researchers were never, as Hymes puts it, "empty-headed" (1978:22). Being able to compare with other cultures and identify what is an important discovery---or, indeed, a discovery at all---has always been an important and necessary skill for the ethnographic researcher---a skill that requires a knowledge base which comes through experience, research, and careful study of the relevant literature.

Why is this Study Important?

I have come across no study that provides an ethnographic perspective of the phenomena that may affect the reading and writing achievement of students in a successful innercity school. The only research that comes close to this is a study by Smith and Geoffrey (1968) that describes what happens in a predominantly White innercity classroom. In this case, Smith (a researcher) and Geoffrey (a teacher) worked as a team. But their research did not emphasize reading and writing pedagogy, and the school in which they carried out the study was not identified as successful or populated by low SES Black children. More recently, a couple of studies of a qualitative nature researched successful reading practices. One study emphasizing reading pedagogy was completed by Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist (1975) --- but in this study the ethnographic observations were carried out by anthropologists and sociologists untrained in reading pedagogy

(Tikunoff, Berliner, Rist; 1975:vii-ix). In addition, the classrooms studied were scattered across many schools, making it impossible to see how the school administration, history, and community affected what happened in the classroom and in the school in general. During the 1972-1973 school year, the New York State Office of Education Performance Review (1974) completed a two-and-a-half month case study of an innercity school that was identified as successful in teaching reading, but they included no in-depth narrative descriptions of what happened there on a day-to-day basis, and there was no mention of the school's history. Absolutely nothing has been done in this vein to study successful practices in teaching writing.

As we will see in chapter two, studies of successful innercity schools, like most educational research, have been dominated by quantitative methods (Hymes, 1978; Wilson, 1977). Often questionnaires were sent or interviews set up to ask the principal or teachers what happens in their school.

Recently, a colleague of mine in educational publishing complained that researching the school market was frustrating since questionnaires often yielded conflicting responses. "How do you ever find out what people really mean?" she asked me. "And why they never seem to come to any consensus?" According to the questionnaires, I suggested. They need to also do some ethnographic research to find out "what is the case"---or at least to know how to phrase the questions (or indeed, to know what questions to ask) on the questionnaires.

Knowing what to ask and phrasing questions in such a way that they will not be misinterpreted is a problem in using quantitative research tools. To compound the problem, frequently those who are asked to respond to a question will say what they think the researcher wants to hear. Moreover, much that happens in a school is not consciously known by those who work there. Principals may not know, for example, exactly how their faculty members perceive them. They may not know how much time they spend working with teachers; and they probably would not be able to describe how they interact with teachers. In turn, teachers may not, for example, be able to tell a researcher exactly how they teach reading or how they interact with their students. You have to be there and watch to find out.

Essentially ethnographic data differ from quantitative data because the researcher spends an extensive period of time directly observing what happens in a school, recording in narrative form a complete picture of teacher and administrative activity within their context, rather than as isolated acts.

What happens is best recorded by someone who is able to empathize with the teachers and administrators because he or she has stood in their shoes and has a comprehensive knowledge of what is being observed (Hymes, 1978:9). After gaining an ethnographic perspective, the researcher is able to put the pieces of the mosaic together for the reader (Smith and Pohland 1976:264-269), and describe, for example, (1) how a typical school day is organized: what the students, teachers, and principal do from minute to minute, hour to hour, day to day; and (2) what exactly happens in the classroom: how, for example, a reading or writing lesson is taught, and how reading and writing skills are reinforced throughout the day, day after day.

The Need for an Educator's Viewpoint. Gaining an ethnographic perspective is dependent on getting the "insider's" as well as the "outsider's" viewpoint (Hymes 1976:4). The ethnographer, according to Wilson:

> cultivates an empathetic understanding of the participant that is nearly impossible with quantitative methods. The researcher shares the daily life of participants and systematically works to understand their feelings and reactions.
> (1977:257)

And Hymes says:

> For ethnographic inquiry, validity is commonly dependent upon accurate knowledge of the meanings of behaviors and institutions to those who participate in them... accurate knowledge of meaning is sine qua non... even though someone may live nearby, speak the same language, and be of the same background, a difference in experience may lead to misunderstanding the meanings, the terms, and the world of another community. (1978:9)

One of the purposes of this study is to provide a model for educators, thus educators must feel that it is a valid, authentic account of "what is the case." One of the criticisms educators have given of ethnographies that have been carried out in the schools is that they have been done, for the most part, by anthropologists who have little interest in education and are even hostile towards formal education. For example, Wolcott accuses:

> During those infrequent occasions when anthropologists have gathered to discuss formal education, an outside observer might find himself wanting to ask: Is this the way anthropologists approach other settings in which they study human behavior or does a discussion of the schools evoke a different kind of response?
> (1971:99)

He then lists the specific ways the schools "have been or can be subjected to 'rough handling' by anthropologists." He says:

1. Even though few anthropologists have done fieldwork in the schools, "they are not reluctant to render opinions and advice on

educational matters."

2. Anthropologists often speak as if all schools were the same, suggesting a naivete about the differences among schools of different types, levels and varied populations.

3. Anthropologists assume schools are "dysfunctional unless proven otherwise." Their commitment as anthropologists should be to describe what happens---not evaluate it or, as is so often the case, attempt to see if they "really accomplish anything."

Wolcott goes on to say that educators might take an educational ethnography more seriously if they felt the researcher had taught in a situation similar to their own and was, therefore, able to see things from their point of view. Indeed, he says:

> There is a persistent belief among teachers that no one can understand the dynamics of a classroom unless he himself has been "on the firing line." (Wolcott 1971:102)

Brophy and Good (1973) have also said that observing a teacher requires having a complex background and set of skills. "If you don't know how to look," they say, "you don't see very much." (36) They go on to say that one must be familiar with the language of the classroom to be able to understand what is happening and accurately describe it.

Dell Hymes has often said that in many cases it is desirable for an ethnography to be done by a native of the community being studied:

> When I refer to ethnography...I assume that the person doing the ethnography may be from the community in question. Indeed, I think it is highly desirable that this be the case in a large proportion of cases. (1978:2)

It appears that his only caveat is that the "native" be trained to be objective and to compare with other similar communities. He cautions against being so close to a subject that you are unable to step back from it and see it clearly, and being so accustomed to certain events that you are unable to notice them anymore; they are seen and done unconsciously.

The Value of Narrative Accounts. Reading a narrative description that has been written by an educator who has gained an ethnographic perspective of a school and its classrooms is, in a sense, even better than being able to observe the scene yourself. To wit:

1. You have the benefit of looking at the scene through the eyes of someone who is familiar with the school and what usually happens there; and

2. You have the added benefit of receiving commentary from this person regarding how what you are seeing compares with (a) the norm at this school, (b) similar situations in other schools, and (c) what the literature says happens in successful schools and classrooms. (Hymes 1978:17)

The narrative descriptions given in this study should provide an educational preview for both pre- and in-service teachers and administrators of a successful innercity school and classroom. Observing an action you may eventually want to perform on your own is crucial to learning how to do it. Because they are usually presented out of context, quantitative research results which are often imposed on administrators, teachers, and students often seem remote from their actual experiences in school (Smith and Pohland 1976:264-279). Without a narrative account of the gestalt, the complete accurate picture, both the "outsiders" and the "insiders" have good reason to question the concepts, hypotheses, and theories resulting from purely quantitative data.

Most would agree that concrete examples, personal accounts, and novels are extremely powerful in making others comprehend a situation. Historical fiction, for example, is often recommended to students to help them understand a certain period in time. As Hymes has said:

> Many anthropologists agree that something of value can be learned from novels of certain sorts, and even recommend certain novels. Clearly there is a sense in which narrative can be a source of knowledge...Some ethnographers and philosophers of science hold that narrative is fundamental in its own right. Indeed they may suspect that narrative accounts play a role in what scientists and administrators believe themselves to know....How often, one wonders are decisions reached on the basis not only of number and experiments, but also on the basis of privileged personal accounts, fleshing out the data to make it intelligible? Sometimes these accounts may be provided by the investigator; sometimes by the audience ("I knew a case once..."). Sometimes they may not be articulated, yet influential nevertheless. (1978:14)

Those who have attempted to describe what actually happens in a successful innercity school have either spent limited time at the research site (Silberman, 1970; Weber, 1971; New York State Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, 1976; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977); or give only rough sketches of the scene (Goss and Hill, 1980; Signore, 1980; Thomas, 1980; Wilks, 1980).

This study is unique because it provides an ethnographic perspective of an innercity school that is successful in teaching reading and writing: an in-depth, accurate account (from both an insider's" and an "outsider's" viewpoint) of "what is the case" there. It is hoped that by reading a detailed, often narrative account, of what happens in this successful innercity school, the reader may see how other innercity schools might be improved.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Innercity Schools that are Successful in Teaching Reading

George Weber (1971), the forerunner of the researchers of successful innercity schools, identified four innercity schools wherein the majority of third graders were reading on their grade level. He defined an innercity school as a "nonselective public school in the central part of a large city that is attended by very poor children" (5).

Reading success was examined during the middle and latter part of grade three. At that point, the school, to be "successful," had to achieve a national-grade-level norm or better as a median and have an unusually low percentage of nonreaders. Sixty-nine of the ninety-five schools that were nominated met both criteria (type of school and reading success). Weber sent a letter to the principal of each school asking if s/he believed the school met both criteria and if s/he would welcome an independent evaluation of reading achievement and the reading program. "This step of asking the principal for permission to visit his school took a substantial toll of the nominees" (7).

Weber visited seventeen schools for two to three days each to (1) check whether they met the innercity school criterion, (2) ascertain, through administration of a test, whether the school met the reading success criterion, and (3) determine the nature of the beginning reading program and, in those cases where the school seemed to meet the innercity and reading success criteria, the factors that seemed to account for success.

Weber described four schools that met both criteria: P.S. 11, in Manhattan; the John H. Finley School, in Manhattan; the Woodland School, in Kansas Ctiy, Missouri; and the Ann Street School, in Los Angeles. He found eight common factors in these schools that were usually not present in less successful innercity schools--- all factors that were under the school's control.

1. *Strong Leadership Specific to Reading.* In each school, this leadership was either in the form of the District Superintendent (Woodland), in which case reading specialists were also placed in the school to support classroom teachers; the principal and a reading specialist (Ann Street), or the principal (P.S. 11 and Finley).

These reading curriculum leaders provided each teacher with a structured reading program to follow, as well as the support and monitoring necessary to make it successful. Their philosophy seemed to be one of which Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote:

> Our chief want in life is someone who will make us do what we can. (Quoted in Silberman, 1970:112)

2. *Additional Reading Personnel.* In every school, there were full-time reading specialists working with the primary grades. At P.S. 11, there was also a fourth teacher for every three classrooms who served primarily as a reading teacher; at Woodland, there was also a full-time reading aide for every classroom and a speech specialist who assisted students in becoming facile in Standard English; and at Ann Street, there was either a second teacher or a teacher aide assigned to each primary-grade class. According to Weber, these additional reading personnel brought "expertise and concentration to the reading program" (27) and allowed for a smaller adult-student ratio for reading instruction. Weber believed the additional federal funds contributed to innercity schools were best spent in this way rather than in reducing class size.

3. *High Expectations* were prevalent in each school. Robert Wheeler, the former superintendent of the district in which the Woodland School is located, typifies the philosophy that with proper teaching, all students can learn:

> The staff has to believe the pupils can and will learn before they can convince the students that they are not doomed to fail... We began with the fundamental belief that innercity pupils can learn as well as other pupils, provided the priorities are sensible, the effort intense, and the instructional approaches rational in terms of the needs of the learners. We have not accepted the myth that environmental factors develop unalterable learning depression. We believe that so-called negative environmental factors can be overcome with sensitive and responsive teaching [rather than] just more zoo trips or...oatmeal. (19)

As Wheeler said, high hopes are a prerequisite to success, but alone they are not enough. There must also be sensible priorities, intense effort, and teaching that fits the needs of the learners. This brings us to the fourth common feature in the successful schools Weber studied:

4. *Strong Emphasis on Reading.* In every school, reading was a priority in the primary grades. This emphasis was reflected in the additional reading personnel, and a "planned precise" reading program in each school. At Woodland, between two and two-and-one-half hours per day were devoted to reading instruction; at Ann Street, two hours; at P.S. 11, one-and-a-half to two hours were devoted to reading instruction, with the poorest readers in grades three, four, and five spending an additional one-and-a-half hours per week with a reading specialist; at Finley, reading comprised the bulk of the day, with students having direct instruction for one-half-hour daily in homogeneous groups, then doing a prodigious amount of independent reading of books on their reading level.

5. *Good Atmosphere.* In each of these schools, Weber says, there was "order, [a] sense of purpose, relative quiet, and pleasure in learning" (26). The principal was typically described by Weber as a "no nonsense leader" who ran a "tight ship" and saw as a first priority the establishment of discipline and order.

6. *The Teaching of Phonics and Spelling Patterns* was emphasized in each school. Two of the four schools utilized the McGraw-Hill Sullivan Programmed Readers, which are based on the phonic-linguistic methodology. According to Weber, all four schools emphasized phonics to a much greater extent than did most innercity schools (1971:27).

7. *Individualization.* Students were continuously monitored to assure that they were receiving instruction to fit their needs.

8. *Careful Evaluation of Progress.* There was continuous evaluation of students' progress, with students in one school being tested as often as every month by a full-time reading specialist. In some schools, charts were posted to indicate each classroom's achievement on standardized reading tests.

There are several facts that indicate Weber's study, while carving a path for later, more sophisticated studies in the same vein, does, however, leave out important details about at least two of the successful innercity schools he researched. There were key features unmentioned in Weber's research that were present at Woodland and Finley when Weber visited these schools. Silberman (1970:110) tells us parental involvement was one of the keys to Finley's success; and at Woodland, parents were also heavily involved in their children's education (Thomas, 1980). Guthrie (1976) also reports that parental involvement was a common feature in the successful reading programs he reviews.

On-going inservice training was another, perhaps, key feature that led to the success of both Finley (Silberman, 1970:110) and

Woodland (Thomas, 1980). Guthrie (1976) also cites this as a common characteristic of successful reading programs; moreover it was also evident in two other successful innercity schools (Signore, 1980; Wilks, 1980).

At Finley, there was also "great stress placed on developing pride in children's racial and ethnic identity" (Silberman, 1970:111). Weber also fails to mention this feature that Silberman reports was also very much in evidence at P.S. 146, another successful innercity school he visited; likewise, it was a major characteristic at the Nairobi Day School (Wilks, 1980).

Silberman (1970:99-112) found six of the eight characteristics Weber identified in two successful innercity schools he visited P.S. 146 and 192, both in Harlem: strong leadership specific to reading, additional reading personnel, high expectations, a strong emphasis on reading, good atmosphere, and careful evaluation. He does not cite the teaching of phonics/spelling patterns and individualization as being evident in these schools. This is not to say that these features were not characteristics of these schools. Weber (1960) visited P.S. 192 in 1969 and found the teaching of phonics to be heavily in evidence. And we know phonics was stressed at Finley, the third school Silberman visited. Unfortunately, Silberman does not tell us how much time he spent in each school,[3] but he could not have had the intention of following up on Weber's findings since his study was completed a year before Weber's monograph (1971) was published.

At Woodland (Thomas, 1980) and Nairobi, (Wilks, 1980) teachers were trained to be aware of their students' Black English Vernacular and to accept it, as well as teach them to be facile in Standard English. Perhaps in contrast to this, Weber (1960) reports that P.S. 192 "makes no concessions to" Black English Vernacular (4). Weber writes:

> Dr. Gang says that the school does not worry about it, uses Standard English. He comments characteristically that 'the dialect problem' is important only in the educational and sociological literature. (4)

The treatment of students' Black English Vernacular is not mentioned in other studies of successful innercity schools or successful reading programs involving poor minority children (Silberman, 1970; Weber, 1971; New York State Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Madden, Lawson and Sweet, 1976; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977; Goss and Hill, in 1980; Signore, 1980; Thomas, 1980; Wilks, 1980).

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[3] He gives us only a hint when he reports that he completed three separate visits to Finley, one of the three schools he researched. (1970:104)

Goss and Allen (1980), and Signore (1980) attributed the success of their innercity schools to involving faculty and parents in agreeing on a need for change and in actively supporting their schools' reading programs. Common characteristics cited by Weber (1971) could also be identified in the descriptions they provided: strong leadership, high expectations, careful evaluation of progress, emphasis on reading, good atmosphere, additional reading personnel, and the use of phonics (in both schools a phonic-linguistic series was utilized to teach reading). Individualization, a seventh characteristic cited by Weber, is not apparent in their descriptions.

Watson (1974) gives us a close, sensitive look at three secondary school principals who are succeeding seemingly against all odds. He tells of principals of innercity schools that operate with clear priorities, goals and objectives; schools where students are achieving as well as their middle-class counterparts, schools that are located in close proximity to typical innercity schools in which students are failing. Instead of reacting to the typical difficulties of the urban principalship with, as Watson says, "resentment, panic, or attempts to be all things to all [people]," successful principals of innercity schools look upon them as "exciting challenges" (33). They do everything in their power "in spite of the system" to make sure their teachers are teaching and their students are learning. They expect problems to be par for the course they have chosen; and they realize that to succeed in their jobs, these problems must be solved.

The leaders whose stories are told in In Spite of the System took several common steps: (1) they assessed current needs and possible resources---even unlikely or untried resources; (2) they determined to deal with the school's most pressing problem, whether or not it seemed to be an educational one; (3) they considered the conventional wisdom and, if they found it necessary, they discarded it; and perhaps above all else, they (4) never lost sight of the fact that the goal of the school is that all students learn. Watson gives this charge to the urban principal:

> With commitment to his task of making and maintaining an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish, he may discover on the one hand that the system can be made to work, or on the other hand, that his school can work in spite of the system. (36)

Successful Reading Programs

John Guthrie (1976) reports that the American Institutes of Research (AIR) sent Program Information forms to more than 1500 programs nationwide to determine their effectiveness in teaching reading. Twenty-seven of these programs were recommended by AIR and then reviewed further by the Office of Education Dissemination Review Panel. The Review Panel approved fourteen of the programs, and of the fourteen, Right to Read recommended twelve to be disseminated as exemplary.

Six unique features of the successful primary reading programs that Right to Read recommended have been cited by Wargo et al., (1972): careful planning/clearly stated objectives; (2) intensive instruction; (3) directly relevant instruction (4) individualized/small group instruction; (5) teacher training in methods of teaching reading; and (6) active parental involvement. Guthrie (1976) adds two others that Weber also delineates: (1) continuous evaluation and diagnosis of students' needs and progress; and (2) the utilization of additional reading personnel. He summarizes the incidence of these characteristics in Table 1.

Comparisons of More and Less Effective Schools

The New York State Office of Education Performance Review (1974) completed a case study of two socio-culturally matched innercity schools, with one school having significantly higher reading, word recognition, and comprehension levels in the fourth and sixth grades. They studied the two schools for two-and-one-half months, observing and interviewing staff members to determine what school factors could have impacted on the discrepancies in reading achievement. They found striking differences in the two schools --- differences under the schools' control that have been cited repeatedly in the literature.

In School A, the successful school, the administrative team provided strong leadership with a balance of management and instructional skills. In School A, there was a schoolwide effort to plan the teaching of reading, including better organization of reading time, and teacher-training programs. In School B, the unsuccessful school, the administrative team never developed a comprehensive plan for dealing with the reading problem. In fact, lack of administrative coordination and direction for student's learning in School B was correlated with friction among the staff. Moreover, students in School B were more disruptive and absent more often. Personnel in School A had high expectations of students' performance, provided on-going evaluation of progress,and were less pessimistic about their ability to have an impact on their students' achievement. In contrast, teachers in the unsuccessful school attributed students' reading problems to factors beyond their control.

Factors common in the schools Weber (1971) identified were also identified in the successful school in this study: strong leadership

Table 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL AIR READING PROGRAMS

COMMON COMPONENTS

		Objectives and Planning	Teacher Training	Relevant Instruction	High Intensity in Instruction	Parent Involvement	Individualized Instruction	Resource Personnel and Reading Specialists	Continuous Feedback
PROGRAMS	Intensive Reading Improvement Program	X	X	X	X	X		X	
	Project Read	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	Title I Reading Center	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Learning to Read Through the Arts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Andover's Individualized Reading System	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Child Parent Center	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
	All Day Kindergarten	X	X	X	X	X	X		

(Guthrie, 1976:148)

specific to reading, high expectations for student achievement, and on-going extensive student evaluation. Teacher training and parental involvement were also factors evident in School A, but absent from School B.

Edmonds (1979:17-18) reports that in 1976, Madden, Lawson, and Sweet studied school effectiveness in California. They matched twenty-one schools on the basis of students' SES level and other cultural characteristics, with one school in each pair having high-achieving students and the other having low-achieving students, according to standardized test scores. They found that:

- The teachers in the high-achieving schools indicated that their principals and District administration gave them significantly more support than did teachers in the low achieving schools.

- Teachers in the higher-achieving schools exhibited more task-orientation in their classrooms and applied "more appropriate principles of learning" (17).

- There was more of an atmosphere conducive to learning in the classrooms in the higher-achieving schools, as well as more student monitoring, more student effort, and happier children.

- In the higher-achieving schools, there were less paid aides and those who were assisting classroom teachers were more likely to perform nonteaching tasks such as maintaining class discipline, watching children in the yard, and doing classroom paperwork.

- Teachers reported they had more access to "'outside the classroom' materials" (17) in the higher-achieving schools.

- Teachers seemed to believe they had "less influence on educational decisions" (17) in the higher-achieving schools.

- For purposes of instruction, classrooms were divided into less groups in the higher-achieving schools.

- Teachers in higher-achieving schools seemed to be more satisfied with their work than were teachers in the lower-achieving schools.

Edmonds concluded:

> ... the California study is notable chiefly for its reinforcement of leadership, expectations, atmosphere, and instructional emphasis as consistently essential institutional determinants of pupil performance. (18)

The Michigan Department of Education assigned Brookover and Lezotte (1977) the task of locating and studying schools wherein pupil achievement was either consistently improving or consistently declining according to criterion-referenced standardized tests. Trained interviewers visited eight of these schools (six with improving student achievement) and interviewed and administered questionnaires to a large number of the school personnel. They found the following differences between the improving and declining schools which seemed to account for the differences in student achievement. In contrast to the declining schools, in the improving schools:

- The improvement of reading was a fundamental goal.

- Personnel had higher expectations of their students' ability to master basic skills as well as complete high school and college.

- Teachers and principals assumed responsibility for their students' learning and did not blame lack of progress on the students themselves or their parents.

- The faculty spent more time on direct reading instruction.

- The principal was more likely to be an assertive instructional leader, more of a disciplinarian, and assumed more responsibility for evaluating whether or not instructional objectives had been met. (Principals in the declining schools were apt to be permissive and to concentrate on becoming a friend to the teachers.)

- There was more acceptance of the concept of accountability and the use of the criterion-referenced standardized tests as one way of measuring their effectiveness. (In declining schools, this notion was generally rejected.)

- Teachers had higher expectations for their students' achievement and were, therefore, less satisfied with the status quo. In the declining schools, teachers were more complacent with current levels of student achievement.

- There was more parent-initiated involvement, but less overall parent involvement.

- There was less involvement of paraprofessionals.

All of the studies just reviewed (New York State Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Madden, Lawson and Sweet, 1976; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977) comparing high-achieving/improving schools with low-achieving/declining schools point to strong leadership, high expectations, good atmosphere, and emphasis on reading as factors that seem to consistently distinguish successful schools from their less successful counterparts.

* * * *

Little is said about what exactly happens in the classrooms of teachers who are successful in teaching reading and writing, yet numerous studies have cited the teacher as the most important determinant of students' reading achievement (Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Harris and Morrison, 1969). Not surprisingly, factors which distinguish effective classrooms from their less effective counterparts: strong leadership, high expectations, good atmosphere, and emphasis on reading.

More Effective Teaching of Writing

Compared with reading, studies of the teaching of writing began much later and have been much less prolific. (Lundsteen, 1976:7) Eileen Tway (1973) reviewed the literature on the teaching of writing but found few studies "with documented evidence of actual teaching behaviors" that lead to improved writing. (1) She says that most of the studies she encountered examined the effects of isolated teaching approaches or methods on children's writing. As we will see, a few isolated procedures which seem to lead to better writing achievement have been uncovered, but as Tway says,

> The question becomes which teaching approach combined with what teaching strategies or behaviors brings the greatest improvement in writing. (1973:2)

It appears that neither quantitative nor qualitative research has been carried out to determine the factors that appear to be present in elementary classrooms wherein writing achievement is high. Research has, however, pinpointed a few isolated procedures that seem to help students become more proficient writers:

Oral Language Base. Research shows that "written language needs to be tied to an oral language base." (Lundsteen, 1976:1) Lundsteen reports that the considered opinion of the leaders in language arts education is that:

> Conversation and 'freetalk' are the basis for consciously structured reporting...The confidence and fluency that stem from composing with spoken words and body language is essentially related to composing with written words. (2)

In Help for the Teacher to Written Composition (1976), Lundsteen says that the process of the teacher's writing a story a student dictates is the "most helpful link" between oral and written composing. She further explains that seeing your own words in written form is an "exhilirating experience" and that seeing someone write what you say helps you to understand that writing is written talk (2).

Functional Writing Practice. In a three year experimental study, Burrus (1970) found that students were superior in their demonstrated knowledge of basic writing mechanics when they were given extensive practice in writing from dictation, discussing the mechanics involved, and, later, composing themselves, then sharing their compositions with students, and filing them in individual folders. In the experimental classes, the focus was on "real communication," rather than on completing textbook exercises. Burrus concluded that the experimental groups' acquisition of writing mechanics was a result of teachers' having students acquire these skills through functional writing activities.

While there is little research on the effect of oral language development and functional writing practice on students' writing skills, curriculum guides written as early as 1894, have reflected the educator's view that writing will improve with functional practice in both oral and written language. Excerpts from the Committee of Ten Report written in 1894 reflect this belief. The Committee recommended that:

- Every effort must be made to assure that students gain full control of "the language" and that students "should be kept so far as possible away from the influence of bad models and under the influence of good models." Furthermore, this "training in English" should continue throughout the day in every subject to which the student is exposed, "whether it be geography, physics, or mathematics" (87). The Committee recommended that students be corrected whenever their oral or written responses deviated from Standard American English. In order to gain "secure control of the language," The Committee of Ten suggested that in grades 1 and 2, students should orally retell stories and orally compose original stories about pictures, etc.

- "Not later than" third grade, students should begin writing compositions. For instruction in writing mechanics, they should copy paragraphs from the chalkboard, and write from dictation "and from memory short and easy passages of prose and verse" (87).

- In grades 3-6, students should be required to write compositions often and complete functional writing exercises. The caveat was that "The greatest care should be taken to make these exercises practical rather than technical and to avoid the errors of old-fashioned routine method of instruction in grammar" (87).

This excerpt from the Hosic Report, a curriculum guide written for the secondary school in 1917 and featured in Lundsteen's work as "a document that had implications for elementary school teaching" (1976:9-10), shows a further refinement of the theory of the interrelationship of written and oral language.

It also reflects the belief among educators at that time that students need to spend additional time writing and learning about writing:

> 1. Training in composition is of equal importance with the study of literature and should have an equal allowance of time. Composition work should find place in every year of the school course.
>
> 2. Subjects for composition should be drawn chiefly from the pupil's life and experience. To base theme work mainly upon the literature studied leads pupils to think of composition as a purely academic exercise, bearing little relation to life.
>
> 3. Oral work should be conducted in intimate relation with written work, and ordinarily the best results will follow when both are taught by the same teacher.
>
> 4. Theory and practice should go hand in hand. The principals of grammar and rhetoric should be taught at the time and to the extent that they are aids to expression.

The Individual Writing Conference. In a small study conducted by Ujlaki (1968), a major portion of writing instruction was carried out via one-to-one writing conferences involving a teacher and a student. A major implication of this study was that the value of these individual writing conferences should be further studied. The individual writing conference is often listed as an aid to children's writing (Robinson and Burrows, 1974; Lundsteen, 1976). Mills (1970) also found that reading their compositions aloud during these sessions seems to improve students' writing skills.

Oral Display. Students should have the opportunity to read aloud their compositions. Research shows that children's writing will be more vital if they know that what they write will be shared with others, as the experimental children shared their writing in the Burros study. Lundsteen (1976) says:

> To get valid samples of how children write when part of a communicating society, they must be given a chance to communicate in reciprocal relationships. (38)

She suggests that students consistently be given the opportunity to share their compositions with their classmates and get their reactions. Also highly recommended is having teachers write appreciative comments on children's compositions, as well as displaying compositions on the bulletin board. There is little hard data other than the Burrus study (1970) that supports this need for oral display. But the considered opinions of language arts educators, as reported by Robinson and Burrows (1974), support Lundsteen's conclusion. They say that the excellent teacher of language arts:

> Provides for children's sharing their stories and verse as a valid and essential part of the communication program; often reads aloud the writing of those children whose oral reading is ineffective... Involves children in genuine communication through practical, informational writing and sees that such writing is shared through oral reading and visual display. (78-79)

The Motivational Discussion. One of the implications of a study carried out by Huntington (1969) was that oral planning or discussion of what a student will write may contribute to the improvement of writing. In 1970, Beeker investigated the effects of oral planning on students' compositions and found that class discussions did not seem to lead to improved writing achievement. He concluded that a more individualized sharing of ideas would probably lead to more improvement.

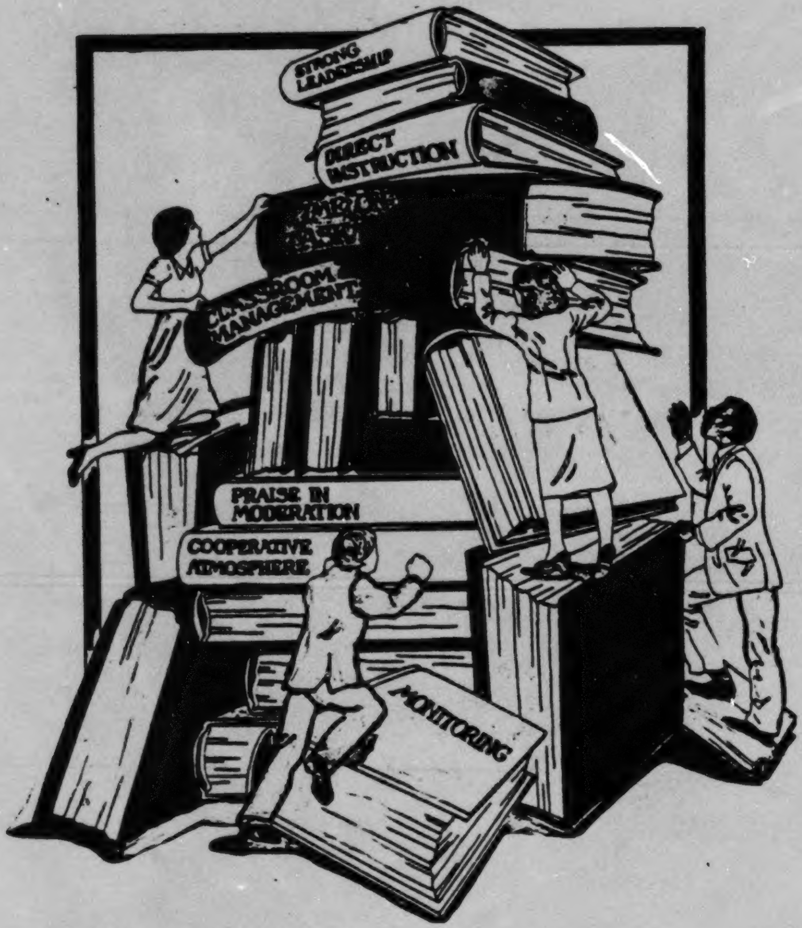
Exposure to Children's Literature. Many leaders in the field of language arts education believe that exposing students to children's literature greatly contributes to their oral and written composition skills. Lundsteen (1976) says:

> Awareness of what a story is grows from early exposure to stories heard and read... Through imaginative and realistic literature, the oral and written heritage is a vast resource for children to draw upon in their own compositions. (3)

De Vries (1970) discovered that simply exposing students to children's literature was not enough; in order for this exposure to improve their writing abilities, it had to go hand in hand with additional practice in writing. After a nine-week study, De Vries found that students who were exposed to children's literature and received writing practice showed greater improvement in their writing than did students who were merely given more writing practice. O'Dea (1965) also rejects the widely-held assumption that students learn to write well by simply reading good literature, but admits that:

> Those who read well are rewarded in several ways, one of which is increased proficiency in writing...Just how this happens, we do not yet know. (328)

More Effective Teaching of Reading


STRONG LEADERSHIP
DIRECT INSTRUCTION
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
PRAISE IN MODERATION
COOPERATIVE ATMOSPHERE
MONITORING

(This illustration of effective teaching practices appeared in Educational Leadership, October 1979, 37, No. 1.)

Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist (1975) completed a qualitatvie study utilizing ethnographic observation to determine what teaching behaviors are positively correlated with student achievement in reading and mathematics. Two hundred California teachers were recruited, one hundred second grade teachers and one hundred fifth grade teachers. Each teacher was assigned two Experimental Units to teach for two weeks. Students' pre- and posttest scores were then analyzed to determine which teachers would participate in the study. Ten teachers with students who achieved more than predicted from their pretest scores were designated as "more-effective" teachers. Ten teachers whose students achieved less than predicted from their pretest scores were designated as "less-effective" teachers. These twenty teachers comprised the Known Sample of teachers whose classroom practices were then analyzed. Data were collected by twelve graduate students in anthropology and sociology who were trained in ethnographic techniques and given general background about second and fifth grade classrooms. They were not told which teachers had been designated more-or less-effective. Each teacher was observed for one full week.

They found that the "more-effective" teachers:

- Allocated more time to teaching reading and had students engaged in reading instructional activities (with which they had a high rate of success) for a greater proportion of the school day. They also found that students engaged in reading instruction for greater amounts of time did not have declining attitudes toward reading or school.

- Were more aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses and provided more appropriate instruction to fit their needs.

- Provided more direct instruction for their students, monitored their progress more, and provided more individual feedback.

- Provided more structure for lessons and more specific directions about what students were expected to do.

- Chastised their students less often for being "off-task."

- Concentrated more on student learning and less on social development.

- Had classrooms wherein students had more responsibility for completing their school work, and for taking care of their classroom and belongings.

Soar (1973) reports the findings from the last year (1970-1971) of a three-year quantitative study of 289 Follow Through and comparison K-2 classrooms nationwide. Observation scales were utilized to describe teacher behavior and then correlate this with pupil growth. Although there were inconsistencies, the following teacher behaviors were found to correlate with student skill growth in reading:

(1) strong leadership and control, structure, more time spent on reading and drill, and lesser amounts of student freedom; as well as (2) more direct instruction as opposed to having students work independently.

In 1974, Stallings and Kaskowitz presented the findings of observations of first and third grade Follow Through classrooms which had been completed in the Spring of 1973. Teacher behavior was again correlated with student skill growth in reading and their findings are similar to those of Tikunoff, Berliner, Rist (1975) and Soar (1973). Students achieved more in reading when: (1) there was more time spent on systematic instruction in reading, with the teacher providing information, asking a question about the information, and then, if necessary, guiding the student to the correct answer; (2) there was a high rate of drill, practice and praise; and (3) when first graders were instructed in small groups, whereas, third graders seemed to do well in large groups. Brophy and Evertson (1974) studied teachers to determine the teaching behaviors that correlate with students' reading achievement. Their sample was comprised of second and third grade teachers whose students throughout the years achieved the same amount of learning gains. Coding instruments were utilized to observe thirty-one teachers four times each the first year, and twenty-eight teachers (including nineteen from the previous year) fourteen times each the second year. To assure reliability, pairs of observers were assigned to each classroom.

Their findings are similar to those of Soar (1973) and Stallings and Kaskowitz (1974) for what constitutes effective teaching behavior. Similar to Kounin's findings (1970), the most effective teachers in this study were adept classroom managers, keeping their students actively engaged in productive work that led to the achievement of specific objectives, and minimizing wasted time because they avoided allowing problems to get started in the first place. They found that mastery of basic skills in the early grades required much more time spent on direct teaching and practice as opposed to classroom discussion.

Kean et al., (1970) sought to "identify the factors that contributed most strongly to achievement growth in reading" (1). They rank-ordered all Philadelphia elementary schools according to their average reading scores and overall gain scores during the 1974-75 school year. The sample was comprised of ten schools from the top of this list, ten from the bottom, and five from the middle of the list. All fourth grade pupils from these sample schools were studied.

Teams of researchers from the Philadelphia School District's Office of Research and Evaluation and the Division of English/Reading Language Arts Education visited the twenty-five schools and interviewed the principal, teachers, reading teachers, and reading aides. Information about the following was gathered for each fourth grade student:

(1) the child's principal, (2) the schools' reading teacher, (3) the classroom teacher, (4) the school itself, and (5) the child himself.

They found that the following factors correlated with pupil gain in reading achievement:

- attending kindergarten;
- being absent less often;
- having a principal who had "experience in the field of reading;"
- having a principal who observed classrooms more often;
- being in a school that had more professional supportive staff per pupil;
- attending a K-7 school, or next best, a K-8 school;
- having a teacher who was absent less often;
- having a teacher who had taught fourth grade more than one year;
- being taught reading via a linguistic basal reader;
- having less reading aides per week;
- having more direct contact with the teacher;
- having sustained silent reading more;
- being in a larger class (up to 35) rather than a smaller class (as few as 24);
- being taught in a small group/whole class combination rather than only individually, or only in small groups, or only as a whole class; and
- having a teacher who would choose the same reading program again.

Syntheses of Results of More Effective Teaching Studies

This synthesis of the process-product research summarized on the previous pages will follow the same organizational scheme that

Frances Ruff (1978) uses in the review completed for Research for Better Schools.

Time. Ruff (1978) calls this "the most discussed and perhaps one of the most critical variables relating to student achievement" (23). Several studies have found that absolute time spent in school (calculated from indices such as average daily attendance, length of school year) correlates positively with student reading achievement (Kean, et al., 1979). But even more striking than the effect of time spent in school is how this time is spent. Student achievement in reading seems to depend on how much time students are actually engaged in academic learning activities, such as reading, rather than in non-academic activies, such as art or music (Soar, 1973; Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1974; Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist, 1975; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977). Rosenshine (1977) points out that time usage means the amount of time engaged in learning, rather than the amount of time allocated to academic instruction.

Instructional Organization. The most effective organization seems to be the teacher working directly with small groups or the whole class, rather than with students individually or in pairs (Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1974; Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, 1976; Kean et al., 1979).

Monitoring. Students seem to do best when they work in groups under adult supervision, rather than when they have more unsupervised seatwork (Soar, 1973; Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1974; Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist, 1975; Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, 1976) with an adult unavailable to answer questions (Brophy and Evertson, 1974).

Management. Ruff (1978) defines management as "all the behaviors teachers exhibit to form the ground rules by which instruction and interaction occur in the classroom" (26). Teachers seem to be most successful in achieving reading gains with low SES children when they play the role of strong leaders in their classrooms (Soar, 1973; Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1974; Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist, 1975). The most successful teachers in these studies:

> directed activities without giving their students choices, approached the subject matter in a direct, business-like way, organized learning around questions they posed, and occupied the center of attention. (Rosenshine, 1977:11)

Brophy and Evertson (1974) suggest that more effective teachers devote less time to management and criticism and spend more time utilizing various managerial techniques to avoid allowing problems to get started in the first place.

Instruction. Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist (1975) and others suggest that "if a student has not been taught what s/he is being tested for, then achievement will be low" (Ruff, 1978:29). More effective teachers seem to quickly provide feedback to students' answers, then continue with the main task (Stallings and Kaskowitz, 1974; Brophy and Evertson, 1974; Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist, 1975). Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist (1975) also found that more effective teachers informed their students of the objectives of lessons, and of their own expectations for achievement. In addition, they linked current lessons with material previously studied.

Consistent with one common characteristic of many successful innercity school Weber (1971); Wilks (1980), Goss and Allen (1980), Signore (1980), and Kean et al. (1979) found that students taught via a phonic-linguistic basal reading series achieved distinctly better than pupils taught via eclectic reading approaches.

Environment. Ruff (1978) defines this as "all the behaviors which contribute to the support and enhancement of the instructional tasks in the classroom" (32). Brophy and Evertson (1979) and Stallings and Kaskowitz (1974) found that more effective teachers use more praise and positive reinforcement with their students. Higher achieving classrooms seem to be characterized as being "convivial, cooperative, democratic, and warm;" whereas in lower achieving classrooms, there seems to be more "belittling, shaming of students, and the use of sarcasm" (Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist, 1975:20). In addition, there seems to be less disruptive behavior in the classrooms of more effective teachers.

In summary, the findings of these studies of more effective teaching behavior suggest primary-grade students achieve more in reading when their teacher: (1) assumes the role of a strong leader, using time efficiently and keeping students engaged in task-related activities; (2) organizes students into medium to large groups for instruction; (3) monitors work while being available to answer student-initiated questions; (4) structures lessons so that students are aware of objectives; and (5) sustains a classroom environment that is warm, friendly, democratic, and relatively free of disruptive behavior.

* * * * * *

As Foshay has said:

> One serious drawback to [process-product] research is that at present, the process is not adequately understood or described. (1980:82)

The studies reviewed in this chapter provide us with a list of factors that seem to be evident in successful schools and classrooms serving low SES students, but, for the most part, they tell us little about how the "pieces of the mosaic" fit together. How are these factors manifested in the context of the classroom and the school in general?

What factors will be apparent when one school and classroom are looked at in-depth?

CHAPTER THREE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Reading. Most innercity schools serving very low SES Black students fail to help children achieve at or above the national norm on standardized achievement tests in any grade (Weber, 1971). Research shows very low SES Black students lag behind their higher SES Black and White counterparts beginning in kindergarten, with the gap widening as the students advance in grade (Seitz, 1977:1). Most of the research relevant to the failure of schools to teach reading to very low SES Black students has focused on what makes it difficult for these children to learn rather than on low SES Black populated schools wherein students are achieving. This highly publicized research has caused those charged with teaching very low SES Black students to have low expectations and a feeling of helplessness in accomplishing their mission.

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter indicates that, while there have been many studies providing either a list of facts or rough sketches of more successful innercity schools and classrooms, there appears to have been no study providing an ethnographic perspective of a successful innercity school from the perspective of a Black educator (Silberman, 1970; Weber, 1971; New York State Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Watson, 1974; Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, 1976; Brookover and Lezotte, 1977; Goss and Hill, 1980; Signore, 1980; Thomas, 1980; Wilks, 1980).

*Harriet Tubman is a very low-SES-Black-populated innercity school wherein the majority of children in grades 1-6 read on-grade level according to curriculum-based Informal Reading Inventories. It is an innercity school that is succeeding in an environment where others are failing; it is a school that parents maneuver to get their children into. Not a private school: a public, nonselective innercity school in a very low socio-economic status neighborhood; a school wherein the majority of children live in high-rise public housing projects; a school that even a few parents who can afford private school send their children to.[4]

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*In order to protect the privacy of the subjects in this study, their names, and the name of the successful innercity school in which they work, are fictitious, and minor facts, that in no way impact on the outcome, have been masked to protect their identities.

The one-hundred or so blocks that constitute the radius of the Harriet Tubman School boundaries form a natural triangle, thus the area is often referred to by that name. According to U.S. Census figures for 1959 and 1969, median family income for residents of the triangle was among the lowest in the city and the percentage of those unemployed ranked among the highest. According to documents maintained by the Metropolis School District's Office of Research and Evaluation, Harriet Tubman ranks fourth, out of the more than twenty-five elementary schools in its subdistrict, in the percentage of students attending who come from low-income families. Yet, 50% of its students in grades 1-6 read on-grade level according to Informal Reading Inventories administered throughout the school system under the supervision of the District's reading staff. Harriet Tubman is one of only two schools in its subdistrict of more than twenty-five elementary schools about which that statement can be made. From 1977 through 1980, 50% or more of the students in grades 1-4 consistently scored above the national norm in reading on the California Achievement Test, a standardized instrument. Harriet Tubman is one of only six schools in its subdistrict about which that statement can be made.

One of the purposes of this study was to find out what may affect the reading achievement of students at Harriet Tubman, a successful innercity school. In an effort to determine this, I examined in depth the following factors: the principal, the teachers, the involvement of parents, the official and unofficial policies of the school, and documents from the Metropolis School District. I set out to answer the following specific question:

> What happens on a day-to-day basis in the school and individual classrooms at Harriet Tubman that may effect its students' reading achievement?

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[4] Harriet Tubman has been designated a Back-to-Basics School, which means that it can draw students from outside of its school boundaries. Slots become open only when students who live within the immediate boundaries of the school choose to attend school elsewhere. In spite of this official "open admission" policy, the vast majority of students attending the school live within the school's boundaries, and even those who maneuver to attend from outside the boundaries come from very low SES families. In addition, the policies that are dictated in the Back-to-Basics Program are policies that the school had begun to implement in 1970, when the new principal, Howard Best, came on-board. Since the school and its policies have been altered little by the establishment of the Back-to-Basic Program, this investigator believes Harriet Tubman fits the definition of a non-selective innercity school attended by very low SES students.

From this general question, the following sub-questions emerged:

- What do a random sample of teachers do on a day-to-day basis? How do they organize instruction, instruct, manage, and monitor?

- What does the principal do on a day-to-day basis to facilitate the teaching of reading?

- For what amount of time and in what ways are children actively involved in reading and reading-related activities?

After a few months of studying the school, the following sub-question was added:

- What is the history of the school and how has it affected current policies and practices?

Writing. According to the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress, Blacks, children of the poorly educated, and children who live in impoverished areas are much less likely to write "good, expressive papers" than are students who live in affluent communities. Yet, at Harriet Tubman there is a teacher, Mildred Gray, who has not only helped her students to be competent readers, but has also assisted them in writing as well as the average student in Grosse Pointe, Michigan --- one of the most affluent communities in the country.

Since there is no research that looks at what a successful teacher of writing does, the second purpose of this study was to determine what happens in Mrs. Gray's classroom that may affect her students' reading and writing achievement.

In summary, this study sought to answer two general questions:

1. What happens on a day-to-day basis in the school and individual classrooms at Harriet Tubman that may affect its students reading achievement?

2. What happens on a day-to-day basis in the classroom of a teacher who has exhibited a superior ability to teach both reading and writing?

Since the study is ethnographic in nature, these questions could not be addressed without also studying the community that impacts on the school. The following questions were focused on in studying the community:

- What happens in the Harriet Tubman community that may affect students' acquisition of reading and writing skills?

- What values appear to be espoused by the students' parents and by community organizations?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

> Ultimately, one must choose a methodology that best suits the particular problem at hand. Participant and nonparticipant observation seem best suited to describing the reality of schools and schooling (Rist, 1973:24).

The purpose of this study was to determine what happens at Harriet Tubman that may affect its students' reading and writing achievement. We attempted to gain an ethnographic perspective of the school and its community because we wanted to find out, via continuous direct observation, "what is the case" there. (Gearing, forthcoming:1)

The methodology utilized to determine this has been known as qualitative research (Wilson, 1977:245), ethnography, microethnography, anthropological field methodology, and nonparticipant observation (Tikunoff, Berliner, and Rist; 1975:vi). Human activity is directly observed in an on-going naturalistic fashion (Rist, 1973) by someone able to empathize with the subjects (Wilson, 1977:258), as well as stand back from them and view them objectively. Doing ethnographic observation requires taking on a role of both involvement in and detachment from the daily activities of the subject being researched, of being both a "stranger and friend" (Powdermaker, 1966). As Dell Hymes says:

> It [ethnography] comes to know more of a way of life than those that live that way are consciously aware of, but must take crucial account of what they consciously, and unconsciously, know.
> (1976:2)

Whyte (1976) found that he could not truly learn about a community by knocking on doors and asking questions. He learned to gain the trust of community members by "hanging around" them and learning their values. He learned to listen first and, only after knowing about the culture, "did he begin to understand the questions that should be asked and the circumstances under which he should ask them" (Whyte, 1976:14).

In the preface to his ethnography, The Man in the Principals' Office (1973), Harry Wolcott criticizes the overwhelming utilization of survey techniques in educational research. The results of these surveys, he says, tell us little about what goes on in "real" life.

Gaining an ethnographic perspective enables one to provide the reader with a full, true picture:

> More recently I have been struck with the manner in which the rapidly expanding body of educational research shows a trend toward huge, costly studies which often yield strikingly unimportant data...Human beings get lost in masses of figures which bury the very subjects of study. The surveys tell us more about how the subjects acted during the filling out of a questionnaire than about how they act in their "real" life. So this study grows out of a personal dissatisfaction and impatience with the present over-reliance on data which are quickly and easily obtained but which alone can never provide a complete picture of actual behavior in context regardless of how one increases his "N's" or lengthens his questionnaires. (Wolcott, 1973:xiv)

Gaining an Ethnographic Perspective. Frederick Gearing (forthcoming) describes four essential factors in carrying out ethnographic research that have been adhered to in this study. He says that the true ethnographic observer is careful to (Gearing, forthcoming: 3-5):

1. *Observe wholes.* As David Smith says, the ultimate explanation of whatever you are studying ethnographically must take into account those things which interact with it (1980). To observe a large whole (a school), you would first look closely at a sample of smaller wholes that comprise it (a few of the classrooms) and then describe the larger whole (the school) as a structure made up of many smaller wholes linked together. You would also observe how the even larger whole (the school system and the school's surrounding community) interacts with and affects the smaller whole (the school).

2. *Constantly compare.* As Gearing says, a practiced ethnographic observer cultivates "the ability to compare and thereby intuitively grasp patterns, configurations, gestalts" (4). Think, says Gearing, of how much more information you have about one leaf when you compare it with another. Think of how much more you would learn about one second grade classroom if you compared it with another second grade classroom. Think of how much information you would get if you compared a successful innercity school with other successful schools, or if you compared it with innercity schools in general.

3. *Think inductively.* As mentioned in chapter one, ethnography is "an activity of discovery" (Gearing, forthcoming: 3). According to Gearing, the ethnographic researcher should "enter into a continuing dialogue with the scene being observed" (4) and thereby be open to serendipitous discoveries. The rationale is that you never know if there is something altogether unthought of that may in some way impact on the problem. Thus, one of the requirements of

good ethnographic observation is that the investigation not begin with preformulated hypotheses.

Ethnographic observation involves a dynamic process, so the investigation is generally circular: you observe, then reflect, observe again, then reflect again, and so on. You may go around the circle many times in the course of an investigation, noting paradigms... formulating hypotheses...observing more...reformulating hypotheses...

No one knows more about "what is the case" in a school and its community than the teachers and administrators who work there, and the people who live there (Gearing, forthcoming: 1). They already know all it takes to be a participant in their situation. They certainly know more about their school and community than a person who has come from outside. Obviously, then, the best way to find out all they know about their school and community is to, somehow, get inside of their heads and record what they consciously and unconsciously know (because all of what you know as a participant is not conscious). The researcher needs to find out all that you would need to know to be a participant in that situation.

This requirement that the ethnographer gain knowledge of what the participants in a situation both consciously and unconsciously know is the principal reason that ethnographic observers traditionally have adopted the role of participant observer. The ethnographic observer adopting the role of participant observer would, for example, become a teacher in the school being researched to get a full, accurate, inside picture of "what is the case" there. The observer would then add to this the "outsider's" knowledge s/he has gained from studying similar cultures or situations.

Educational ethnographies have frequently been done by researchers from fields other than education - researchers who often have difficulty gaining the perspective of the teachers and administrators in a school (Wolcott 1971:102). In this study that was not the case. Both the principal investigator, who studied the school, and the researcher, who studied the community are Black educators. The principal investigator grew up in a neighborhood not far from the Harriet Tubman triangle. Her father attended Harriet Tubman and has filled her head with fond recollections of the school since she was a child. In addition, the principal investigator has taught in inner-city schools in Washington, Wilmington, and Philadelphia and has extensively studied the literature on successful schools and effective teaching practices. The community researcher lived in a Metropolis neighborhood very similar to that of the Harriet Tubman triangle for a number of years before doing the study. She had even acquired friends who lived in the triangle before she was aware that she would be doing the study.

These similar backgrounds made it very easy for both investigators to move freely within the school and the community, and for the school faculty and community members to speak frankly and easily with them.

The tools used in this study to gain an ethnographic perspective of the phenomena that may affect the acquisition of reading and writing skills at Harriet Tubman were varied. They were: (1) direct ethnographic observation of a random sample of the Harriet Tubman staff and of the school in general, including focusing on the teacher considered to be the best in the school (as reflected by her students' reading and writing achievement as well as by her colleague's opinions); (2) transcribed tapes of directive and nondirective interviews of those observed as well as other key informants; (3) transcribed tapes of classroom activity; (4) writing tests administered to all second and fourth graders; and (5) documents from Harriet Tubman and the Metropolis School District.

Direct Observation. Five classrooms were observed in-depth over the two-year research period. One class in grades two, three, and six was randomly selected. In addition, a kindergarten and fourth grade class were deliberately chosen to be observed because their teachers, Mrs. Mercer and Mrs. Gray, were purported to be among the best in the school. Test scores collected at the end of the 1978-79 school year revealed that the students in Mrs. Gray's ---the fourth grade teacher's --- classroom were successful in both reading and writing; thus her class was focused on during the second year of the study. In addition to these observations of classroom teachers at Harriet Tubman, the principal and reading resource teacher were observed.

I spent a total of ninety full days over a period of two years directly observing what went on at Harriet Tubman. During the first year of the study, this included spending five consecutive days in each of the five classrooms observed, as well as spending the same amount of time observing the principal and reading resource teacher. The second year of the study these observations were repeated and, in addition, a full month was spent observing Mrs. Gray, the teacher who was considered to be the best in the school, and who was successful in teaching both reading and writing.

Formal observations specifically entailed spending all day everyday for one week in each of the classrooms, as well as with the principal and reading resource teacher, during each of the two years of the study, keeping in contact with the teachers and principal by telephone during the remainder of each school year and visiting with them in their homes to record interviews with them. Working in each classroom and attending assemblies, meetings and parties throughout the two school years, I came to be known as a member of the Harriet Tubman family, sharing their exhilirations and frustrations. Both the principal investigator and the community researcher assumed the role described by Babchuck (1962) as the "participant-as-observer" in carrying out direct observations of Harriet Tubman and its community. In this role, I was known to all as a researcher and was able to devote full-time to the research task, rather than participating in the on-going teaching/administrative duties required of other school employees. This role of "participant-as-observer" has been adopted by others who have carried out ethnographic observation (Wolcott 1973, Smith and Geoffrey 1969, Powdermaker 1966, Whyte 1943) and is a role that may be employed more and more in educational research since there are few opportunities for becoming full-fledged participants in the schools (Wolcott 1973:8).

I am proud to say that I was able to quickly and easily gain the confidence of members of the Harriet Tubman staff and they readily spoke freely to me. This ability to be quickly taken into their confidence was due to the many common experiences we had shared -- the similarities in our cultural and professional backgrounds were uncanny:

Cultural similarities. (1) As I said before, my father had attended the school and had spent considerable time throughout my childhood telling me about it. (2) My family still attended church in the Harriet Tubman triangle, where my father grew up, and were known to many in the school and community. (3) We had many friends in common, due to factors (1) and (2) and the fact that, in many cases, we had attended the same schools, and had even pledged the same Black sorority.

Professional similarities. (1) I had worked over the course of ten years as a classroom teacher, reading teacher, and reading supervisor in innercity schools similar to Harriet Tubman; and (2) I had completed the coursework for a Doctorate in Education, with majors in Reading and Educational Administration, and had read extensively about successful innercity schools and classrooms.

This background not only enabled me to easily fit into the school, it further helped me in gaining an ethnographic perspective by assisting me in seeing things from both an "insider's" and an "outsider's" point of view: (1) I was able to compare what I saw or was learning with what I had experienced in other schools I had worked in, and (2) I was also able to compare all of this with what the literature had uncovered on successful schools and effective teaching.

To ensure empathy, I worked along with the teacher at times, and on some occasions, substituted for her, if she was unexpectedly called away for a short time. I often felt as if I became a pupil of each of the people I worked with and observed---their pupil and their friend; even though I struggled to maintain, and usually did maintain, a necessary detachment in order to objectively watch, record, and reflect upon what each of them was doing and saying.

Informal and Formal Interviews. The principal investigator, teachers, and principal of the school talked often. The teachers and principal knew why I was there and they quickly became my tutors, eager to impart to me how they did things. These informal interviews occurred often during the weeks that I formally observed each of them. We talked daily over lunch, after school, occasionally during planning periods, and frequently rather extensively over the telephone.

I preferred to glean answers to questions that came to mind as I was observing because the literature had shown that the answer to a direct question tells only the respondent's perception of what is asked; whereas the most valid picture may not be consciously known to the respondent. Respondents answers are also colored by what they want you to know about them. I found that usually if I held back in asking a question, it would be answered if I continued to observe, "hang around" and listen, and participate in general conversations. The teachers wanted to talk about their students and how they were doing. Sometimes they asked for suggestions and looked for my reactions. I remembered Dell Hymes' admonition to be myself; thus I tried to "be myself" by reacting positively, while at the same time attempting to have the least affect on their actions. I worked under the assumption that they were the experts about what they did (which, of course, they were)---and that I was studying them because they worked in a successful Black school.

In this way I attempted to gain as much as possible without asking direct questions. But some questions were asked during the school year when I was directly watching what occurred in the school, and others were saved and asked during a formal interview which was taped and transcribed.

Administration of Writing Tests. The Grosse Pointe Michigan Writing Test was administered to all second and fourth graders at Harriet Tubman at the end of the 1978-1979 school year. The teacher usually administered the test while I looked on. The students were familiar with me by that time since I had been "hanging around" the school off and on throughout that school year. I distributed the testing procedures to each teacher and discussed them with her prior to the testing date. Two impromptu writing samples were collected --- each on a separate occasion -- from each student in an effort to obtain a paper indicative of his/her competence in written composition. Administering the test meant asking the students to write a story about one of three subjects that were each introduced and briefly discussed. The teacher usually told her students that I wanted to see how well they could write and encouraged them to do well by commenting on how much their writing had progressed. Students were told they had twenty to thirty minutes to complete their compositions and that no help would be given in spelling words. They were told to try hard to spell accurately, but that if they were not sure, to spell a word the "way it sounded" and we would understand what they meant. At the end of the alloted time, the compositions were collected. If students felt distressed at being interrupted, they were permitted to finish their compositions, and what was written after the actual testing period had expired was then noted.

After both writing samples were collected from each student, I worked with the teacher of the students in selecting the best composition in each pair. These were sent to Dr. Roger McCaig in Grosse Pointe, Michigan for his trained staff of judges to rate and compare. Each of these papers was rated independently by two trained judges, using a criterion-referenced evaluation system. If the two ratings were different, the paper received a third reading from a third judge. The mean and standard deviation was then determined for each class and compared with the district average in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. The results of Dr. McCaig's analysis revealed that the students in Mrs. Gray's fourth grade classroom achieved a mean writing score of 4.03 which was equivalent to the 1979 district average of 4.01 in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, one of the richest communities in the United States.

The results of these tests provided the impetus for the second phase of the study. Students who were taught by Mrs. Gray, the same woman who had been identified by her colleagues to be the best teacher in the school, were successful in both reading and writing; therefore, I decided to focus on her classroom during the second year of the study. This plan became further intriguing when it was revealed that the group of second graders that Mrs. Gray was assigned to teach during the 1979-1980 school year were purported to be nonreaders and discipline problems.

At the end of the 1979-1980 school year, the Grosse Pointe, Michigan Writing Test was administered to students in Mrs. Gray's "low" second grade classroom and to those in Mrs. Wingate's "top" fourth grade classroom and the results were compared with those of comparable students evaluated at the end of the 1978-1979 school year. The mean for each class was compared with its equivalent from the following year using a two-tailed t test to determine the significance of the differences.

Table 2

Comparison of Means on Writing Test

Grade	Teacher	Ability Group	Year Tested	N	Mean	Teacher	Ability Group	Year Tested	N	Mean	t Value	Interpretation
4	Mrs. Gray	high	1979	33	4.03	Mrs. Wingate	high	1980	23	3.34	2.06	Significant at the .95 level
2	Mrs. Gray	low	1980	31	2.74	Mrs. Morgan	low	1979	27	2.51	.87	No significant difference
2	Mrs. Gray	low	1980	31	2.74	Mrs. Holden	middle	1979	30	2.80	.23	No significant difference

As Table 2 shows, Mrs. Wingate's top fourth grade class achieved a mean writing score of 3.34 compared to the mean score for Mrs. Gray's top fourth grade class of 4.03. Students taught by Mrs. Gray clearly surpassed Mrs. Wingate's students in their writing achievement and the difference was significant at the .95 level.

In addition, Mrs. Gray's low second grade class achieved a mean score in writing of 2.74, which was not significantly different from the achievement of the average second grade class the previous year, which had attained a mean writing score of 2.80. And, while the difference is not statistically significant, Mrs. Gray's low second grade class's mean writing score exceeded that of the previous year's low second grade class by .23 points.

Standardized Reading Test Scores. Results from the California Achievement Test on a school-by-school, grade-by-grade basis were obtained from the Metropolis School District's Office of Research and Evaluation. Mrs. Gray provided me with the mean percentile rank of the students in each of her classrooms with the sanction of Mr. Howard Best, the principal of the Harriet Tubman School.

Informal Reading Inventories. Informal Reading Inventories (I.R.I's) which were prepared by the Metropolis School District's reading and language arts staff are administered in all public elementary schools throughout the school year. I.R.I's are used to determine in what level book a student can be successfully instructed. The skills a student is tested on come from the curriculum he has been taught. Thus, these I.R.I.'s are administered by reading teachers or by classroom teachers under the reading teacher's supervision, and test students' ability to read and comprehend graded selections that graduate in difficulty. A summary of district-wide student reading achievement on these I.R.I's was obtained on a school-by-school, grade-by-grade basis from the Metropolis School District's Office of Research and Evaluation. The results of these informal tests, as well as Harriet Tubman's standing vis-a-vis standardized tests were summarized in Chapter Three.

* * * *

The community researcher spent two years "hanging around" the Harriet Tubman community, and both formally and informally interviewing its residents. Some of the informal interviews and all of the formal interviews were taped, and these tapes were transcribed. In an effort to illuminate features of the school-community-home experience that might go unremarked otherwise, the community researcher also concentrated on three individuals whose lives touched because of some relation to the school and/or the community. These individuals were Mrs. Porter, a resident of the public housing projects' high-rise apartment building; Sara, her daughter; and Sara's teacher, Mrs. Mercer --- a teacher who was regarded as one of the best in the Harriet Tubman School and was one of the two teachers the principal investigator had studied closely.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEFINITIONS

Ethnographic Perspective. A kind of case study executed by someone who has found out what the "inside story" is from being there over an extended period of time and observing what happens first-hand.

> The test of ethnography is whether it enables one to anticipate and interpret what goes on in a society or social group as appropriately as one of its members. (Wolcott, 1973: xi)

A chief caveat is that the ethnographer should also be able to compare what is being studied to relevant research (naturalistic, quantitative, or otherwise), in order to knowledgeably formulate considered hypotheses on an on-going basis. (For more on this, see "What is an Ethnographic Perspective?" pages 10 to 11 .)

Innercity School. A public, non-selective school in a large city that is attended by very poor children (Weber, 1971). To fit this definition, the school must have a higher percentage of students eligible for free lunch and living in public housing projects than most schools in the city.

Non-selective School. A school that does not have the power to select students---on the basis of I.Q. tests or other "predictive" measures---who are potential high achievers.

Successful Innercity School. An innercity school wherein students have steadily progressed in their reading achievement (as measured by standardized reading tests) over the past six years and are at least within ten points of a mean score at the 50th percentile.

Reading Activities. All activities in which the student is actively engaged in reading instructional activities, including participating in directed reading activities, completing worksheets that reinforce reading skills, playing games that reinforce reading skills, and reading independently.

Reading-related Activities. All activities that develop students' oral language, vocabulary, and thinking skills. This category also includes composing and spelling activities, as well as reading to students.

Instructional Organization. The way a teacher groups students for instruction (Ruff, 1978:25).

Monitoring. "The supervising behavior a teacher exhibits while students are working" (Ruff, 1978:25) and the feedback s/he gives for work completed.

Management. "All the behaviors (a teacher exhibits) to form the ground rules by which instruction and interaction occur in the classroom" (Ruff, 1978:26).

Climate. "All of the behaviors which contribute to the support and enhancement of the instructional tasks in the classroom" (Ruff, 1978:32) and the school in general.

Instruction. "Any materials, patterns of sequencing and organiation, methods of questioning, and the like that characterize the transmission (and reception) of information in the classroom" (Ruff, 1978:28).

CHAPTER SIX

THE COMMUNITY

The Harriet Tubman School is located in a residential area with an all-Black population. Immediately to the west of the school is a governmental housing project, which features low- (one-level) and high-rise (as many as sixteen floors) buildings. In other directions, predominantly low-income housing prevails. Approximately half of the residents of the housing project are legally within the boundaries from which Harriet Tubman draws its children. Children of other residents of the "projects," as the housing is called, must, at least officially, attend nearby elementary schools in whose boundaries they fall.

The Harriet Tubman school boundaries are contained within a radius of roughly one hundred blocks that altogether form a natural triangle, with Harriet Tubman located just shy of the center. Two sides of that triangle would seem to be natural school boundaries to a stranger entering the area, because those sides are (1) a heavily travelled commercial avenue, featuring retail stores, restaurants, bars, and a variety of other small businesses, and (2) a well-travelled street which is a dividing line between two halves of the projects as well as a connecting artery for a major transit intersection. The third side of the triangle, which defines legal school boundaries, seems arbitrary because only two blocks beyond is another major avenue, which, linked with the two previously described arteries, would seem to form boundaries that, because of the transit and residential patterns, would be distinguishable to any outsider. Conversations with residents reveal that the third side of the school-boundary, prior to the fifties, was itself an active thoroughfare for Blacks; at present, its character is indistinguishable from that of adjacent blocks.

For purposes of the current study, the observable natural boundaries formed by the three major transit thoroughfares have been used as a reference point for observing the community surrounding Harriet Tubman; patterns, as they arise, that override the choice of those boundaries will be noted for what they are worth.

School boundaries, at any rate, are not strictly adhered to, the more so in the case of Harriet Tubman, which is a target school for back-to-basics instruction and is permitted,therefore, to draw children from the entire district. Other reasons for enrolling children from outside the boundaries include the following:

(1) preferences for siblings of previous enrollees whose parents have moved outside the boundaries; (2) enrollees whose parents have given a false address, that of a relative or friend living within school boundaries; (3) preferences given to the children of former graduates; and (4) sympathetic and instructional links with particular school programs.

In addition, parents of children living within the boundaries may elect for a variety of reasons to send their children to a school, public or private, other than Harriet Tubman. Reasons may include the above, as applied to another school, or reasons such as the following: Harriet Tubman has an older building than another public school close by and doesn't look as "clean." Within the triangle, there is one elementary school other than Harriet Tubman, a parochial school with a history of serving various ethnic minorities. Parents who can afford to do so and who believe that their children will receive a better and more protective education in the Catholic school may send their children to St. Mary's.

Inside the triangle, the major number of structures are low- to low-middle-income residences, including single-family homes as well as apartment and rooming houses, most of the latter of which were at one time single-family homes. There are few blocks which do not contain at least one and usually more vacant and/or boarded-up properties, some of which are gutted by fire or ravaged by vandalism and often serving as play areas for children (surreptitiously) or gathering places for men engaged in crap-shooting or activities of a like nature. On the other hand, many properties, roughly a third of the triangle, are well-kept individual dwellings, most of them sprinkled throughout the area. Roughly ten blocks can be pointed to as having consistently ordered and cared-for residences.

At the westernmost, broad side of the triangle, which tapers to a point at its eastern end, are the government housing projects. The eastern section of the triangle contains a housing development that was constructed for senior citizens by the church which has the largest Protestant congregation in the triangle. In addition, vacant lots are sprinkled throughout the triangle, and residents speculate continually about the fate of these lots. Among the speculations are that (1) the city wants to tear down—or allow to fall down--as many houses as possible so that it will be easier eventually to remove all Black residents and rebuild the area for Whites to occupy and (2) one or both of the two universities (or hospitals) in that section of the city intend to expand their holdings and influence to include first the vacant areas, then all of the triangle. Vacant lots and houses are also a target of controversy among the civic-minded regarding what should be done to develop or rehabilitate them.

Within the triangle, institutions with education as their primary function include the two elementary schools, Harriet Tubman and St. Mary's, as well as several pre-school programs. In addition, the churches have their own Bible-study groups and Sunday schools for religious instruction.

As a matter of fact, churches are by far the most conspicuous institution in the Harriet Tubman community. There are approximately fifteen churches inside and bordering the triangle. Denominations include Catholic, Pentecostal and Holiness, A.M.E., and Baptist. Buildings themselves range from the traditional stone structures with steeples and leaded-glass windows to a variety of adaptations based on the resources at hand--e.g., renovated garage with simulated stained glass, refurbished movie theater, store-front and house-front models.

Small businesses form a third type of institution--they include barber and beauty shops, candy stores, corner grocery stores, an occasional take-out sandwich shop, a few bars, a funeral home, a thrift store.

The prevailing atmosphere of the triangle, however, is residential, low-income. The casual passer-through would see an essentially run-down, neglected area, with occasional indications, such as the architecture of the larger churches and some of the houses, that the area had seen much better days.

In comparison with surrounding communities, all of which have names, the triangle is a no-man's land, an expression used on occasion by residents, particularly in lamenting the fact that no funds are forthcoming from the city or elsewhere to make the area a target of revitalization. The designation "triangle" is used at times by residents to identify their community, although the term is not official--that is, you cannot use it in other areas of the city and expect anyone to know what community you are referring to. "Triangle" as a name is inadequate unless used by residents as an in-term serving the purposes of the moment, because depending on your perspective, the triangle(s) formed by the convergence of the major arteries may be of varying proportions.

Other terms used to designate the area may be "up the way" or "down the way," depending on the direction of departure. A person speaking to another while standing in the community east of the triangle would say, "Are you going up the way?" in referring to the triangle. However, that same person, if standing in a community either to the far west of the triangle or southwest or northwest would say, "Are you going down the way?" Similarly, the community east of the triangle (down the way) is the "bottom," and the community to the far west is the "top." The triangle itself in the latter set of designations might accurately be called "the top of the bottom." The designations can be understood in light of the fact that the farther west (towards the top) or "up the way" one travelled, the more privileged were the neighborhoods economically--so that at any point along the way, whether "up" or "down" or "bottom" or "top," the speaker would be stating his or her placement geographically according to the economic and social realities.

The major service agencies in the community are located either on one side or the other of the streets (or avenues) bordering the triangle or are located just outside the triangle, within a block or two. Those agencies include city recreational facilities; health service facilities for physical, dental and emotional problems; a "Y"; and one federally funded agency for combatting proverty. In addition, a post office, private legal and real-estate agencies, and a commercial skating rink are located at the borders of the triangle.

The major commercial avenue, which borders one side of the triangle, features retail and wholesale stores, which sell housewares, plumbing fixtures, auto hardware, and the like. Also on the "avenue," as it is called, are steak shops, barber and beauty shops, numerous bars, used furniture stores, and miscellaneous small businesses.

Several bus routes frame the triangle, taking passengers into the downtown area of the city and back again. In contrast, only one bus travels inside the triangle, yet makes connections with lines outside the triangle, as well as takes passengers into the heart of the downtown and suburbs.

One agency head, who had worked previously in two other low-income areas of the city, stated that she felt the triangle residents were better off than residents of many low-income areas because of the number and variety of services available and also because transit routes are convenient. There is no sense of geographical isolation from other parts of the city. Her appreciation of the accessibility of the area is shared by others. If no other reason is given by residents of all descriptions for believing their community must eventually be "taken over," the point of its strategic location is always mentioned. "All you have to do is stay on the avenue and you're in the heart of the city or you're in the suburbs, whichever you want to be." Residents are accustomed to seeing rush-hour automobile traffic on the avenue taking suburbanites into their city offices and out again.

During winter daytime hours the community is usually quiet. Streets are empty, except during the hours when people are going to work and leaving work or the hour when the schools release pupils and staff. Winter nights inside the triangle are still and quiet. The obvious activity occurs on the avenue, inside the bars or with occasional groups of young and older men fraternizing along the sidewalks.

When the weather is warm, elderly people can be seen sitting on porches or tending their plants and talking to neighbors. Perhaps an older person will be seen trimming a hedge or walking a dog. Particularly near the eastern corner of the triangle, pockets of men between the ages of 20-50 can be seen seated on porch steps, gathered outside one of the few bars internal to the triangle, or standing on the porch of a vacant house. Children play their line games, called "steps," on the sidewalks or in the street near the curb. Ten or more children of varying ages can often be seen from daytime off and on until dark, playing group singing and dancing games. One parent of a ten-year-old boy stated that she had started restricting the movements of her son, telling him where she had "better not see him again," when she passed a corner one day and saw him watching a group of boys his age playing "craps" within yards of older men doing the same thing. She complained about the insensitivity of "some adults," who made it difficult to raise children in the way she felt was proper.

Other triangle activities during warm weather include block parties and outdoor church fairs, the latter of which can last several days, with food provided and recreation for the children of the neighborhood. Church fairs are often announced to the public by use of homemade, printed banners attached to the outside of the building. The banners are used in the triangle to announce varying types of events—e.g., political rallies; church celebrations around a theme (Year of the Family); a block party (Galaxy Seven); or a protest (New Elevators--No More Repairs) conducted in the streets.

During all seasons, the movement of people is more obvious on the avenue and in the government housing project than elsewhere. The projects form a community within themselves, and residents often don't identify with the rest of the triangle as a community, especially if they did not grow up in the area. The projects are located officially in a neighborhood that has a name, although school boundaries as well as the natural geographical boundaries described earlier tie at least half the project buildings to the triangle. City census tracts place Harriet Tubman itself in the named area although most of the school's mileage (as opposed to population density) for drawing children is confined to the "no-man's land" that is the major portion of the triangle.

History. People of German descent predominated in the triangle in the middle to late nineteenth century and were joined by Irish people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The resident Roman Catholic Church was German National. In the early 1900's Irish people were sufficiently represented in the area that names in the church records began to reflect the population change (The church now has an all-Black congregation). A lesser number of Jews resided in the area as well as a number of Blacks. Roman Catholic Church records show the name of at least one Black person as early as 1900. Blacks in the area socially and vocationally were represented by a greater number of "upper-class persons"--teachers, post office workers and a few doctors--proportionately than Whites, who were mainly blue-collar workers. Whites worked for the railroad; poorer Blacks worked for a local laundry. The triangle, in comparison with surrounding neighborhoods, was always middle ground, neither as desirable as areas further west nor as undesirable as the community immediately east. The movement of improvement for Whites was from two-story houses to three-story houses in the immediate area, then farther west, and, finally, out of the city and into the suburbs. The movement for Blacks was from side streets, where poorer families lived, to certain main streets in the triangle, then farther west.

Reasons for the shifts in population are manifold. Contributing factors were the great migrations of Blacks from the South after the World Wars, with the consequent flight of Whites, as well as more local economic reasons, such as the failure of the railroad which had employed many resident Whites. Stability of population was never as much a surety as the old-timers like to imagine, however, as people were always seeking to "better themselves" by moving in whatever direction geographically constituted improvement in their sights. The shifts were class shifts, then racial shifts of population, followed by more class shifts. Finally there was a move away from the neighborhood by Blacks who could afford to move. Reasons for their flight included the fact that real estate speculation by Whites who had bought houses cheaply from owners anxious to leave the area, resulted in a prevalence of inexpensive apartments and quarters of a nature that attracted transient residents rather than permanent ones; those properties suffered indifferent care at the hands of both absentee landlords and temporary tenants. Further removal, both forced and voluntary, occurred when government housing was built, bringing into the neighborhood large numbers of low-income Blacks and welfare recipients. Many Blacks left for the same reasons the Whites had left before them: to reside in neighborhoods that represented economic and social betterment as well as to flee new residents of uncertain means.

Relations among the races through the twenties, thirties and forties--throughout the years the area was mixed racially--were "cordial", according to the testimony of older residents. "Everybody got along fine," is the statement consistently used to describe race relations through that period, which older residents think of as having been a golden age. Business was booming on the main avenue; people did not have to go far afield to satisfy their shopping needs. Although the representation of goods and services was much the same as now, quality of merchandise was of a higher order than currently; that is, quality was competitive with what residents could find in other shopping areas of the city.

On the other hand, evidences are that racial boundaries were understood. Certain theaters were either off-limits to blacks or were accessible only at certain times or under certain circumstances--i.e., certain days with seats in the balcony or on the upper floor. Also, it was understood that Blacks went mainly to Harriet Tubman and Jews to another public school, Irish mainly to another. The Whites who attended Harriet Tubman before it became a Black school and then sporadically for a few years through the late twenties were mainly Irish. Certain clubs and recreational spots were Black; others were Irish. Black-owned businesses were originally confined to a lesser avenue in its accessibility in the triangle than the main thoroughfare.

According to the accounts of older male residents, there were "racial wars" at times among the children and young adults, but the skirmishes consisted of hand-to-hand fighting, rock throwing, and the like. As one man said, "Nobody killed anybody."

The thirties, forties and fifties were the golden years of Harriet Tubman, by the accounts of school personnel and former pupils and residents. Those were the years when the school had as its principal the woman around whose personality and leadership the tradition--exemplary appearance, behavior and scholarship--was begun.

Harriet Tubman was one of four public, elementary schools in the city which were preferred schools for Blacks--i.e., schools to which Black teachers and other personnel were sent instead of the schools with predominantly White or all-White student bodies. The board of education maintained two lists--according to the impressions of teachers, administrators and interested residents--one for Black teachers and one for Whites. And the Black teachers were directed to the four schools with Black student populations, of which Harriet Tubman was one. As such, the school became a concentrated focus and expression of the values, aspirations, concerns and activities of a core of Black educators. Those educators and their Black charges constituted a select group—a cultural enclave surrounded by schools that were overwhelmingly or exclusively White—who were self-conscious about their existence and the significance of it. The mission of Harriet Tubman's educators was admittedly not just to teach basic skills but to drill the students in the ways—manners, speech, appearance and knowledge—of cultivated or "cultured" preparedness.

During the years of racial shift to a predominantly Black residency—the late thirties and, most especially, the forties--Black-owned businesses moved to the major thoroughfare alongside older, White-owned firms, some of the latter of which remain to the present day. Episcopal and other churches became Baptist, A.M.E. or Holiness in the fifties. Theaters were converted into churches.

By the fifties the triangle had only a few Irish and Jewish older residents remaining. The fifties and the early sixties brought the dramatic upheavals of urban renewal—or "removal," as it's called by residents. In the mid-fifties government housing was built--the housing that is pointed to by both school personnel and triangle residents as being the generating point of numerous setbacks to the community: crime, drugs, transiency, school behavior problems. The impact of the projects is both real and imagined; project residents tend to be scapegoats when the source of an ill cannot be identified—e.g., the culprits in a wave of purse-snatching or a hold-up or burglary. Project residents--themselves, original residents—point to a time when the projects were built and the buildings and the atmosphere were "beautiful." They, too, describe deterioration and blame "irresponsible young mothers" or "indifferent administrators" or, casually, a host of other causes. Project residents who, or whose families are, indigenous to the area do not see themselves necessarily as being part of an unfortunate turn in the historical continuity of the area: the projects brought new blood and a youthful vitality to neighborhoods that were already on the downswing.

The consensus of residents encountered in this study--project residents and triangle residents--is that the neighborhood is no worse than it was ten years ago, and, in some ways, is better. Gang activity has lessened; traffic in the hard drugs is either diminished or less obviously prevalent; hold-ups of businesses and house break-ins related to drug traffic are less frequent occurrences. Rarely does anyone say that the neighborhood is steadily declining; a more popular belief is that decline has gone about as far as it will go; and the area, because of forces that will act upon it from outside--specifically, the reclaiming of the area by Whites—will eventually become prime residential and commercial territory.

Demography. School boundaries for Harriet Tubman occupy most of one city census tract and a portion of another. U.S. census figures for both tracts reflect steady population decreases between 1950 and 1970. In both decades, population density for the two tracts was moderate as compared with the rest of the city.

Total population figures for Tracts A and B combined were approximately 12,500 persons in 1960 and 9,000 in 1970. Exact figures for the triangle, as described in the "Community Overview," are not available, as that area straddles both tracts. However, a reasonable estimate is 4,500 to 5,000 persons in 1970. The total population decreased by about one-third in the decade 1960-1970. Census figures show non-Whites accounting for 95 to 96 percent of the population from 1960 onward. Between the 1960 and the 1970 census, the numbers of non-Whites of ethnic backgrounds other than Black increased, although the increase was small--roughly three to four times the number listed in the 1960 census, but accounting for only a fraction of the total population.

The percentage of residents of both tracts who were below the age of nineteen was above the city average, especially for the tract that includes the housing projects, in 1960. From the 1960 census to the 1970 census, a decrease was evident in numbers of young people. Population per household in the 1970 census was roughly average for the city (2.96), but slightly higher for the tract that includes the projects (Tract A).

Median family income was among the lowest in the city as reflected in the 1959 and 1969 census figures for both tracts.

Unemployment figures in both tracts in 1960 and 1970 were among the highest in the city (6.0 or more). The numbers of white-collar workers employed showed increase in the 1970 census; however, figures for the total numbers employed dropped.

According to 1970 census, 20.0 to 34.9 per cent of residents of both tracts, twenty-five years of age or older, had attained high school diplomas, as compared with a city average of 39.9 per cent.

Housing figures, in accord with population decrease, showed decreases in percentages in total number of occupied units and total owner-occupied units in 1960 and 1970 in both tracts. There was an increase in vacant units in Tract B in 1970 by approximately seventy-five units. Percentage increases in housing occurred also in the numbers of multi-unit structures available in both tracts. At the same time, the percentage of overcrowded housing units declined for Tracts A and B between 1960 and 1970 by roughly six points.

Churches. Of the fifteen or so churches, the ones that are not traditional in structure are sometimes difficult to identify, because a housefront may serve as home for a small congregation, and the only indication of the building's use may be a hand-printed board in one window, giving the name of the church, the pastor's name, and the hours of service. Denominations represented are Roman Catholic (one church), Holiness and/or Pentecostal, A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal), and Baptist. Baptist churches outnumber the others.

Most pastors live outside the triangle; a few who are elderly reside near their churches. In one instance, the pastor is semi-retired and ailing. He is the founder of the church next door to his house and has lived in the neighborhood for much of his mature life.

He has seen his congregation dwindle and complains that people don't realize how much it costs to keep a building operative; the church itself is modest but traditional in structure. The congregation is composed of people of middle to elderly years. There is virtually no youth component. The church in question is typical of the smaller institutions; the congregations are dwindling and are composed of older people, many of whom once lived in the immediate neighborhood but now reside farther afield. Pastors complain that although Sunday school hours are posted, children do not come. Only in the larger churches, with congregations numbering in the hundreds or more, is there evidence of substantial youth participation.

Typically only a small percentage--perhaps 5%--of any congregation in the triangle is composed of residents. Others are people who lived in the triangle or bordering neighborhoods at one time and have moved away (or whose families lived there once) or people who live in the general area of the city (West, as opposed to East, South or North) that the triangle is a tiny part of, or people who never lived either in the triangle or in bordering communities. One pastor of a large church stated that 75% of his congregation were geographically linked with people from two small Southern communities. Relatives and friends who followed others north during the migrations of Blacks from the South to the North between and after the World Wars tended to attend a common church even if they weren't able to reside in the same section of the city. Pastors may or may not know much about the community of which the church is a part. In one instance, the pastor said he had heard of Harriet Tubman; however, he was not certain which direction the school was located or how close by it was (a matter of a few blocks). In other instances, pastors have grown up in the general community, if not in the triangle itself, and are active in civic and political organizations affecting the triangle, whether they are currently residents or not.

Churches are easily the most visible institutions. Cooperative behavior among them, however, is limited and is dependent on factors not necessarily related to commonality of denomination or geography. One pastor stated that the pastors of churches with strong "born again" doctrines tended to know one another, although my observations were not such either to prove or disprove the contention. One of the larger churches invites the congregations of neighboring churches to a community get-together each year. On the last occasion, three churches out of the ten invited sent representatives. The attitudes are not antagonistic, however, but non-involved.

In spite of the visibility of the churches in numbers, their impact on the triangle is uncertain. What impact there is, is not so much organizational--program, institutional assertives--as individual. Triangle residents don't necessarily attend the churches in the neighborhood, and the church congregations are not representative of the triangle. On the other hand, key individuals--several teachers at Harriet Tubman; persons active in civic and political activities affecting the triangle; the head of the tenants' council at the federal housing project--do attend churches in the triangle. Also, at least three of the pastors are most vocal and active in triangle concerns. Two of those pastors grew up in or near the triangle.

There is no organizational link between the churches and Harriet Tubman. As stated earlier, knowledge of an interest in the school varies from pastor to pastor. Several pastors stated that there should be more contact between personnel of the school and churches, and one pastor was hopeful that my inquiries and activities, as researcher, might help to bring about some mutually beneficial interaction. Several pastors stated that they were interested in starting a tutorial program as part of the church's services to the community; in one instance, a program had been started and cancelled for lack of consistent volunteer help. Pastors generally did not know the principal of Harriet Tubman personally; several said they knew "of him."

Except for the church participation of individuals, the major link between school and church is that of the children. The children of the triangle participate in summer activities--Bible school and day camp and free breakfast programs--and such activities as Scouting and after-school recreational/tutorial programs when the latter are in force. One pastor said that the children come to church activities first and that they sometimes bring the adults later.

Children less frequently or consistently attend Sunday school. The hope of the churches is that the special programs will attract the attention of the children, who will then become regular church attenders. In fact, one church person complained that "when the food is gone, the children are, too."

In the one Bible school I observed, teachers tended to be non-residents while assistants were residents. The leader of the school, who was a public school teacher (not Harriet Tubman), on vacation envisioned herself and her program as something of a cultural, religious and educational oasis. She saw her mission as being that of upgrading the youngsters--neighborhood children--and volunteer aides in their cultural, educational and religious awareness.

An incident illustrates the fact that individual churches are "communities" within themselves, relating primarily, if not exclusively, within the ranks of their own and not to other church communities:

> Over a period of some weeks, a representative of one of the larger churches was engaged in the task of finding living space for an elderly member. The member had no living relatives and was functioning in a state of ill health. Efforts to turn up space within the congregation were proving fruitless; several possibilities had been explored, and one temporary placement had been secured, which then had proven inappropriate.
>
> One institution within the community is a conspicuously large, modern nursing home operated by the church of another denomination. The nursing home is within easy walking distance of the church in question and had been founded to serve primarily residents of the area--the triangle and surrounding communities--regardless of denominational preference.

> To an outsider, it seemed a "natural" that the nursing home should have been one of the first possibilities explored, since the elderly member would receive professional care and would be residing in a clean, bright facility in the neighborhood to which she was accustomed.
>
> Having observed the representative's frustrations in locating a suitable place, I finally ventured to ask why he did not try to place the woman in the nursing home described, a facility that he passed at least several times in the course of a week, driving to and from church activities. He seemed surprised, then reflective. "You know," he said, "I never thought about it." Clearly, he identified the nursing home with the other church. There was no antagonism involved, just a lack of seeing.

Pastors may be acquainted with one another personally, but the knowledge is gained apart from institutional cooperation--i.e., personal introductions, service on civic boards and committees.

Businesses. Businesses internal to the triangle are mainly small proprietorships: barber and beauty shops, corner grocery stores and candy stores, combined take-out eateries/groceries. There is one funeral home and a laundromat. Owners generally have lived in the triangle for 30 or more years and can readily talk about "then" as opposed to "now." They are more likely than pastors to have knowledge of the history of Harriet Tubman and the community. Of owners randomly approached, every one knew either a current or past principal (or both) of Harriet Tubman and had something to say about the character of the school. All felt that the school had always been a good school (in translating "good," they would mention graduates or general reputation or the character of a principal or the strictness of discipline) and that the neighborhood had once been a most desirable place to live. One particular barbarshop has been in its present location for 35 years and has maintained much of its clientele. Customers range in age from 40 to more than 70 years. Customers know one another and engage in a steady stream of banter with the proprietor, a man in his late 60's. Of the two barbershops I observed on random occasions, the one on the avenue had younger customers and a less personal atmosphere, reflecting the fact that businesses on the avenue draw a greater diversity of clientele than those inside the triangle.

On one occasion the barber in the triangle asked me what I was doing at Harriet Tubman, and I said, "parent interviews at present." I mentioned that I had failed to make contact with the interviewee for that day, and he suggested that I interview his customers. There was much joking about whom I should interview:

> Barber: Bob here, he's the one to talk to; he's been around a long, long time.
>
> Bob: Not me, not as long as Mac over there. He's the one to interview. He can tell you 'bout things going way back. (Laughter.)

Bob and Mac had attended Harriet Tubman when the original Black principal was there. Bob couldn't remember at first who the principal was, although he had attended Harriet Tubman much later than Mac, who was in his late 70's.

Barber: Is she still alive?

Mac: I don't think so.

Barber: Seemed as if she was around for a long time.

Interviewer: Someone told me this once was the "toastie" neighborhood (neighborhood of Blacks who were lighter-complexioned and well-off economically, and who presumably considered themselves to be "better than" other Blacks).

Bob: Oh, no, (Agreement from others.) That was on the other side of _____ Street (a neighborhood farther west, or at the "top").

Barber: Fairfield Avenue (current school boundary which appears arbitrary, because a more travelled avenue is only two blocks beyond) used to be "the place." Everybody came to Fairfield Avenue. Also to the club on _____ Street, People came from all over the city. [A famous sports hero] used to come all the time to that club; you know other people came if people like him were coming.

Mac: The numbers men out there [on Fairfield Avenue] kept their pockets so full they couldn't cram any more money into them, so many people were playing. (Others agree; head nods, grunts.)

Bob lived some distance from the shop but came back to his old neighborhood to get his hair cut. "I got my first cut here." Mac still lived in the triangle. Although the three customers didn't enter the conversation directly, it was evident from their smiles and head nods in response to what others were saying, as well as from the barber's periodic attempts to "pull them out" that they were at one time or currently residents.

The men speculated about my origins, which are Southern, then began telling me about their Southern relatives. Bob said that Black people live better in the South than in the North. The barber countered that there are "slums everywhere and good neighborhoods everywhere" and that "if you go 'way from 'round here (immediate community), you can find some fine neighborhoods."

The conversation was noteworthy in that it reflected several trends: (1) the attitude that tended to see the better off people as, living farther west, (2) consensus that the neighborhood had deteriorated from a former position of having widespread appeal, (3) identification with neighborhood roots, and (4) identification of Harriet Tubman and its history with the character of a principal.

There is no organization internal to the triangle that links the businessmen. Although there is a businessmen's association on the major commercial avenue, it has not extended membership offers to businesses not located on the avenue itself.

The association on the avenue is composed of Black and White owners of businesses; but, the most active members in providing financial support and attending meetings are White. According to the spokesperson for the association, 70 to 75 percent of the association's support is provided by Whites. Not all the avenue's businessmen are members of the association; quite a few are in a state of quiet disaffection because of suspicions, justified or not, about the role of the organization in lobbying for benefits in the best interests of most, as opposed to the interests of a few. Some of the disaffection is based upon differences with the spokesperson for the association, an outspoken and energetic Black woman who provokes either admiration or animosity among residents of the avenue more readily than indifference. My inquiry as to why Whites were more supportive than Blacks of the association brought the response from her that Whites see their support as being "good business." She stressed that the practical motivation was more basic to the issue than the humane where Whites were concerned: the vulnerability of White owners in a predominantly Black area and their desire to keep the businesses afloat and lucrative.

An example of a White owner who is not a member of the association is Paul Stein, who has operated a hardware store on the avenue since the early thirties. Stein, who is Jewish and in his seventies, spoke readily about Harriet Tubman and the neighborhood. He was able to tell me about older Blacks he knew who had attended Harriet Tubman although he faltered somewhat when asked whether Harriet Tubman was in his memory a Black school exclusively; he did say that Blacks mostly attended but that there were some Whites. Stein was anxious to present a picture of racial harmony through the late twenties and the thirties and forties, "before the foreigners came." As it turned out, "the foreigners" to him were the Blacks who had come North from the South during the great migrations as well as the newcomers to the neighborhood from other parts of the city. He stated repeatedly that the Blacks, Jews, Irish and German people who lived in the community through the era of relative population stability got along fine and that there were no racial problems at all. "Everybody was the same." The circumstances in his view were "beautiful." Stein knew many of his customers by name. He reminisced about the days when the avenue was a "promenade"—when people dressed up in their finery in the late afternoons and the evenings and strolled conspicuously along the "Pike", as it was called then, to be seen and admired and to see and admire others.

Stein's clientele, like that of most other businesses on the avenue, is primarily, if not exclusively, Black. In speaking of the articles of used furniture and other odds and ends blocking the sidewalk across the street from his store, he waved his hand, as though to sweep the offending articles away. "There was none of this. It was beautiful—beautiful."

Stein had been robbed twice. He spent several days in the hospital for a bullet wound sustained on the first occasion, and he showed me bullet holes in cans of nails and in the side of a shelf to demonstrate the ricocheting path one bullet had taken.

Stein lives in the suburbs. On being asked the inevitable question, "Why don't you move your store?" he answered that at his age he had no place to go.

Stein is one of the numbers of White businessmen whose family histories are rooted in the neighborhood. Although he--and others like him--no longer lives in the triangle, there is some emotional identification retained with it and its residents. Stein was the first person to tell me that Harriet Tubman had had a White principal prior to the principalship of the Black woman most residents believe to be the original principal, and that Harriet Tubman had once had some White students. Also, he had some knowledge of landmarks in the neighborhood historically identified with Blacks. Owners like Stein balance between identification with residents--often knowing whole families and chatting familiarly with customers about nephews and cousins--and aloofness from residents, signified in part by their lack of involvement with anything in the neighborhood that does not contribute to business viability. Unlike the Blacks who work in the area and live elsewhere or who head institutions and like elsewhere, there is no sense of there being potential for greater neighborhood participation. No statements are made by Whites lamenting their own lack of involvement, or relating to the issue as one with foreseeable possibilities.

Oriental businesspersons are becoming rapidly more visible on the avenue. Attitudes about the newcomers are mixed. Some residents are resentful because they believe the U.S. government has favored new immigrants for business grants and/or loans in neglect of Blacks who try to obtain assistance. Boycotts of businesses operated by the newcomers are mentioned privately as a possible means of retaliation, but not carried out in any recognizable way. Other residents believe that the appearance of the Orientals is a positive sign, particularly if the owners choose to live in the community and to send their children to the local schools. Persons of the latter persuasion contend that mixed-ethnic neighborhoods are always healthier psychologically and more interesting than "ghetto" neighborhoods. Although the new businesspersons have joined the association, their residential preference at present is not the triangle or nearby neighborhoods.

Recreation. During the summer months, sports leagues and teams provide competitive play for youngsters and adults. Although leagues and teams generally are affiliated with a recreational facility because of use of grounds and sometimes equipment, the impetus is carried through the desire of some one individual to coach a team or sponsor a league--one of the best-known leagues for youngsters in the area that includes the triangle as well as surrounding communities, is a prominent businessman/bar-club owner--or just to work with a group of children. The key individual is not usually on the payroll of a center but is perhaps someone who has frequented the grounds and developed an interest in spearheading an activity. An example is that of a young man who for several years spent vacations "hanging around" a certain recreational facility, talking with friends, drinking with the assembled regulars, or just relaxing on his own. After several summers he expressed a desire to coach a junior softball team and sought assistance on how to go about it from a peer who had, some years earlier, become coach for an older group of players through much the same process. The young man has coached the junior team for two summers.

A casual but regular activity such as that which occurs when teenagers play basketball on an available court, using either their own equipment or that borrowed from the center, may become organized if and when the participants decide they would like a coach so that they can sharpen their team sense and become competitive, either with similar groups in the neighborhood or from outside the neighborhood. Team names may be that of a street in the neighborhood from which players are drawn, the name of a business that has contributed uniforms and equipment or the name of an individual.

The key individual is not necessarily a resident of the triangle; in one instance, the individual is of another race and socio-economic background, but has coached a team for several years.

The larger churches sponsor outside special days for church members and for neighborhood children and adults. Non-member children attend these affairs more frequently than non-member adults. Activities include organized games, music, and free play. In addition, church groups or groups supportive of a recreational facility may sponsor bazaars. One such bazaar featured a flea market, used-clothes sale, sale of home-baked goods and used-book sale (books were children's books, several reference books, and a host of popular-romance novels).

Short-distance trips are sponsored during the year by church clubs and others--e.g., the tenants' council of the government housing projects. Trips may serve fund-raising purposes or serve simply to create recreational outlets for parties who are interested. One resident stated that she tried as often as she could to get away from the projects and that she had no sympathy for the young mothers who claimed they couldn't get the money together for a two-day trip on a chartered bus. She said, "I'm on welfare, too. All of us are in here [the projects]." Her means was to save $10.00 a month for a year so that she would have the funds for at least one trip, and she felt that he opportunities were thwarted because of others who weren't prepared financially for outings that required a group effort to become a reality. The woman who complained was of late middle years. Posted mimeographed notices of trips are often seen on trees, posts, storefronts, or church bulletin boards. As another resident stated, trips serve the purpose of "getting people out of the neighborhood, giving them a chance to experience something different."

Discos are held for the young and old. One such disco, sponsored by the tenants' council, was held in the central-office facility and was attended by pre-teens, mostly girls, who danced the popular steps in formation, four girls squared, under the watchful eyes of mothers and siblings. Other discos are sponsored for teenagers by an interested volunteer through one of the recreation centers; teenagers dance out-of-doors to a stereo hook-up. Occasionally during the warm months, live bands will be featured on a special day, perhaps a celebration of an African holiday, under the sponsorship of a recreational facility. Such occasions will draw youngsters and teens and young adults from all the communities that surround the triangle; their drawback is that they can spark fights and gang warfare, in seasons when gangs are active.

Block parties, fire-hydrant play and backyard cook-outs are other favored summer activities.

The one commercial recreational facility in the community, used primarily by children and teenagers, is a skating rink. The rink provides a focus of contention for parents who are wary of sending pre-teens to a place where "rough kids" are always "hanging around." Parents interviewed said that they never allowed children below teen years to go to the rink unless accompanied by themselves or older siblings and then infrequently.

Social service agencies, churches and recreation centers sponsor summer camps that provide outings for the children who attend--picnics and swimming parties routinely, as well as visits to museums and places of interest in the city.

Play in the community differs from play in school in that the school restricts play that is not consistent with the values that the school upholds. One game that is not allowed on school grounds is "Mississippi," a line game (called "Steps) played by children in the triangle of all ages through early teens. "Mississippi" and games like it have a base of consistently sung phrases around which children improvise, sometimes with profanity or sexual references. It is not uncommon on fine days to see eight or ten children of varying ages engaged in a rousing performance of "Steps" within yards of the gambling activities of older men congregated on a street corner or the porch of a vacant house.

The school otherwise does not monitor the play of children at recess, except to prevent fights and accidents.

Among the primary classes at Harriet Tubman, girls choose to play with girls as a rule and boys with boys. Girls jump rope and play hop-scotch and circle games. Boys play tug-of-war, ball games and "race" one another. Boys also tease the girls by interfering with the rope games or throwing the ball among a circle of girls. Although they are not allowed to leave the schoolyard without permission, boys and girls (boys more frequently than girls) sometimes go to the store or visit favorite afterschool play areas.

It is not possible to discuss with residents play and recreation among children without references arising to fights. The memory of fights, the imminent likelihood of fights, and the necessity of coping with fights in the future are constant refrains among adults and children. Movement of youngsters is restricted for reasons of safety (accidents, harrassment by older children and sometimes adults) and to prevent the occurrence of fights. Children themselves choose to play where they will be less likely to have to battle others. According to one fourth grader, a high-achieving student, who was conscientious about both her grades and her behavior in school, "My mother didn't want me to fight, my father didn't want me to fight, my grandmother didn't want me to fight, and I didn't want to fight; but I had to fight." In effect, fighting and--more so--communication to others of the readiness to fight is essential to establishing conditions for play--i.e., to having others "leave [one] alone."

Educational Cooperation. There are official and unofficial cooperative arrangements between educational institutions within the community. Official arrangements are those mandated for public schools by the board of education. These include shared personnel, space, services and activities in such programs as Follow Through, Books for Tots, and special services for the academically talented, handicapped and learning disabled children.

Unofficial arrangements are those created through voluntary action of the parties concerned. The unofficial arrangements take place most noticeably between after-school and pre-school programs and the public schools in the area. In one instance, parents of children in a preschool program voted to send their children to a public school just outside the triangle in preference to Harriet Tubman, and the tradition has maintained itself for no apparent reason other than the fact that the initial contacts made between personnel of the two institutions have tended to prove ongoing. The original choice was made, according to a spokesperson, for reasons not specifically educational--i.e., newness of the other building, existence of an escort service. In another instance, 80% of project children in an after-school program attend Harriet Tubman, and the communication among parents of the two institutions as well as personnel who have become acquainted with both institutions has tended to stabilize the population of the after-school program in its identification with Harriet Tubman.

One most interesting example of cooperation is that maintained between parent-cooperative pre-school program and one particular kindergarten teacher at Harriet Tubman. In this instance, the pre-school teacher consulted independently with one of the kindergarten teachers with a reputation for being academically oriented--that is, emphasizing "work" rather than "play." The pre-school teacher was in the process of setting up a program in a recreation center close by Harriet Tubman, one which would draw its children primarily from the triangle. Her concern was that she teach children the kinds of skills they would need to be prepared for entering the "top" kindergarten class at Harriet Tubman. Understandably then, children graduating from the pre-school program were taken first by their parents to the particular kindergarten teacher for consideration on recommendation of the pre-school teacher. Whereas, in previous years 95% of the youngsters graduating from the pre-school program entered Harriet Tubman (if not always the preferred class), the number has dropped in the last year to a lesser percentage, roughly 60%, due to (1) migration of parents to other parts of the city with continued enrollment of siblings and (2) enrollment of children from outside the area because of word-of-mouth reputation of the program through parents and interested residents.

Pre-school programs in the area tend to favor one public school or the other. One learns that children from A school "go to" Harriet Tubman rather than the nearest public, elementary school outside the triangle, and children from B school to the latter.

With the exception of examples noted, the sharing of educational resources among community institutions relies upon individual initiative of parents, who may choose, for instance, to enroll a child in a "Y" class or perhaps a class at one of the recreation centers, and depends on the initiative of the children themselves who may encounter a learning situation accidentially—i.e., "wander into" a class or attend with a friend and choose to remain.

Civic Cooperation and Leadership. Complaints are numerous about the lack of cooperation among residents for purpose of neighborhood improvement. Rather than forming a cooperative network, public and private institutions tend to be beachheads in themselves. Personnel may be unaware of or distrustful of the motivations and services of personnel in nearby institutions and agencies. There is much concern in every facet of community life about whether or not leadership is "ripping off," i.e., exploiting the people, financially or psychologically. These concerns, when pursued verbally, tend to be shadowy in their substantiation. When told of neighborhood efforts to revive an old civic organization, one agency head complained, "If [the organizers] were sincere, they would just come in under our organization. We're already trying to do what they're proposing to do. Why don't they help us instead of trying to start something new?"

The usual organizational pattern--a pattern which cuts across civic, educational, business, recreational and religious considerations--features a somewhat self-willed leader at the top of the hierarchy whose philosophy and strategies for action determine the accessibility of the organization to participants and to those who would care to participate. The viability of the organization or institution is dependent upon whether or not that individual in his or her personal philosophy and method, reflects the values, formulated or unformulated, of a substantial number of constituents. If the leader runs counter to the will of the rank and file, it is more likely that the dissidents will remove themselves and retreat into inactivity, leaving the old organization officially intact but ineffectual; pursue non-organizational means of accomplishing the goal; or set up an alternative structure similar to the old but with more compatible leadership, than it is likely that the old leadership will be replaced and the organization become revived along reformed lines.

An exception to the pattern seems to be that represented by a block organization that decided to do something to develop a city-owned vacant lot. Although, by the informant's account, the organization had potential for falling within the least effective expression of the pattern noted above, consensus within the body was sufficient to "get things done" by a less ordered but more representative process that at times involved verbal confrontations, compromises and eventual agreement.

A key factor within the organizational/institutional process of achieving action is that of confrontation. In fact, the issue of confrontation--when it will happen, if it will happen, when it has happened previously--is one that permeates community life.

In the example of the block organization, the eventual result was the development of the vacant lot into plots of garden land for growing vegetables, a cooperative arrangement that involved block residents as well as the solicited aid of a city gardening advisory agency. It can be speculated that the reason it was possible for confrontations to be aired and then worked through was the limited number of individuals involved (never more than representatives of two blocks) as well as their long acquaintanceship and interdependence.

In the example of the gardening cooperative and one other, a baseball league for men, verbal confrontation has been the rule in the planning and carrying out of the purposes of the organization. Again, with the league, the issue of procedure--anxiety that meetings be conducted and strategies undertaken in a manner that is "correct"; i.e., by the book, whether parliamentary or rule book or perception of some individual(s) of the proper way of accomplishing a task--is a dominant theme. (In the instance of the gardening cooperative, the informant stated that the director was over-concerned about "rules and procedure" but that "we were able to get around that.") Confrontation as a necessity--the working out of varying points of view--is ever in conflict with concern about procedure.

Constituents' perception as to whether "things get done" or do not "get done," is tied to their perception of leadership and its relation to confrontation. At Harriet Tubman, teachers and parents believe that the job of education is able to proceed with some efficiency because the principal controls confrontation (student-to-student, parent-to-school, teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-administration) although there is recognition in some places--noticeably among individuals who would like to see more artistic expression reflected in the curriculum and more educational experimentation--that preoccupation with order can be restrictive, resulting in things not getting done.

"They don't want [are not going to "let"] anybody in there who doesn't see things the way they see them," is a much-repeated statement. People respond quickly to cues that would shut them out, anticipate such cues, at times will not go towards a situation because they have decided beforehand what the outcome will be. On the other hand, leadership is wary of dissidents, or people who would "tear down" what they have built or tried to build or are trying to build.

Residents expect effective leaders to be "strong"--that is, to be able to prevent confrontation from becoming disruptive--and at the same time, they want to be able to voice their opinions and have their opinions and grievances addressed. They look to ordered procedure as a means of achieving both goals.

In the example of the baseball league, actual meetings are likely to be boisterous--members speaking at the same time, even shouting--and complaints are heard that "nothing ever gets done." The observable growth of the league, which has doubled its participation over the period of the two years this study has been in progress, and its apparent stability in the face of diversity (professionals, ex-convicts, blue- and white-collar workers)is evidence that much does, in fact, get accomplished.

Whereas most organizations in the triangle and on its borders can be identified with a personality: residents say, "Oh, the (name of organization)--that's (name of personality)," or search their minds to come up with a name, the league is an exception; the organizer perceives his role as being that of a catalyst.

The case study which follows demonstrates aspects of leadership controversy within the triangle.

Case Study: A Civic Organization

I had made a habit early in the observations of asking residents whether there was a civic organization representing the triangle. Although I was at the time interviewing key individuals from the business, recreational and religious communities, no one had heard of any such group. The first mention of a civic organization was made by an elderly pastor, who told me he and a few residents had organized and incorporated a body some years earlier and that the purpose of that body was to find monies for rehabilitating properties. He told me that the organization represented the triangle exclusively. When I expressed surprise that no one else had called attention to the organization, the pastor explained that little had been done in the last few years and that the group had fallen into inactivity following submission of a proposal to the city--a proposal on which no action had been taken. He made no secret of the fact that a block had been selected for rehabilitation that was located in close proximity to the church. He complained that it was difficult to maintain the interest of residents, that people would come to a few meetings, then would not be heard from again.

Subsequently, I met a resident of one of the better-kept blocks in the triangle--a Mrs. R--who expressed to me, in the casual context of her front porch, that she had done all she felt she could do to help her less fortunate neighbors ("neighbors" meant for her at the time those families on her block and adjacent blocks whose children frequented her own block for play or were visible in other respects). She said she had tried to raise the consciousness of individuals--children, in particular, whom she had taken into her home and tried to teach manners and certain skills--but had been met only with ingratitude. Her position was that she had "written off" the idea that people in the neighborhood could be helped. She was speaking in particular of those who were unable, for whatever reasons, to maintain their properties and control their children in a manner consistent with her own values, which stressed respect for property, moral uprightness and financial responsibility.

It was evident that she was speaking primarily about a three-block area, and I expressed that perhaps it was necessary that larger territory, such as that of the triangle, organize itself for action regarding housing, uses of property, residential control and similar matters. I said that, perhaps, acting alone or with just a few neighbors precluded commanding sufficient clout to have an impact upon the actions of individuals whose lifestyles she considered undesirable. I asked if she had heard about the civic organization, and she said she hadn't. Her general tone throughout the conversation was one of pessimism. She expressed that she had tried "everything" and that nothing was possible--that there were those who just didn't want anything for themselves and would try to prevent others from having anything.

Mrs. R. and her husband were professionals who had bought a home at small cost a few years earlier and had rehabilitated it themselves. They represented "faith" in the neighborhood and were one family of a small number of young persons who had decided to stake a claim in the neighborhood with hopes it would "go up" on its own or that they could, employing youthful energies and idealism, cause it to go up. Because neighborhood meant to them at the time of our conversation primarily what they might encounter through sight and sound from the vantage point of their own front porch, they had concentrated their energies upon their own block and one other which was equally well-kept. The R's related to the have-nots and to those who appeared not to have the same values as their own, with missionary sensitivity at best. Having decided conversion was not a possibility, they were concerned about containing the advance of persons considered morally suspect.

Similarly, the F's are a young couple who have purchased a house in the triangle. Mr. F. attended Harriet Tubman and has lived in the general neighborhood all his life. The F's have several children, all of whom attend Harriet Tubman (the children of the R's attend a private school). The F's, like the D's, are wagering on the neighborhood's improvement. Their own lifestyle spans values that would be abhorrent to the R's at certain points and most acceptable at others. Whereas on the surface the two couples appear similar--they are about the same age, appear to be middle-income, and have attained bachelor's degrees--the F's are streetwise and maintain contacts with a broad range of individuals of varying lifestyles and financial solvency.

The R's and the F's represented an energetic faction within the community who realized that the neighborhood could go "either way" and were eager to have some impact upon its future. They and others of their persuasion, unaware of the older civic organization, made steps to create their own body. At the initial meeting, a representative of the older group let the newcomers know that an organization already existed and that strategically it would be unwise to have two groups represent the triangle. Consequently, the newcomers began attending meetings of the older group.

From the beginning, it was clear in the combined meetings that the newcomers had a different agenda, or broader one, than the old group. The newcomers were interested in youth education, general beautification of the area, reclaiming of vacant lots for recreational purposes, and services to the aged, whereas the older group seemed to concentrate primarily on the rehabilitation of vacant homes for resale. The older group was most concerned about the fate of its proposal for rehabilitation of houses, and the new individuals were considerably miffed that they had not been allowed to see the original proposal and that no one intended to permit them to do so. Considerable tension had been built around the initial meetings of the two factions, old and new. Although the meetings themselves were conducted with decorum and politeness on every side, there had been much speculation privately as to the outcome.

An additional factor in the triangle is the number of men, ranging in age from late teens to fifties, who are out of work and have time on their hands. Many have prison records or at the least police records. Others have difficulty getting and keeping jobs because their skills are poor or because they have drug and alcohol habits that interfere with employment stability. Some have laborer's jobs and spend the off-hours in the bars or in companionship at selected spots with others who have time on their hands.

Most have long-time ties with the community—the broader community of which the triangle is part—through their own upbringing or that of close relatives. The majority have old gang ties, the memory of which is most alive to them. The comings and goings of these men involve a subculture of its own. They know one another and one another's families, frequent the neighborhood bars and clubs, participate in gambling activities, and retain a strong interest in anything that affects the area. Their loyalty has a chauvinistic quality. They are the ones who will talk on and on all evening, with little or no prodding, about who used to live where, what was once located where and who frequented it, who went to school where, and why one thing happened to change the neighborhood as opposed to something else. They will tell you about the fights they engaged in as youngsters with the Italian youth or the Irish youth and how, relegated to the balcony of the local movie theater, they used to throw candy wrappers down on the heads of the White people on the main floor, while the residents with solider-family economic roots will speak of the harmony that existed between the races in the thirties and forties and how no distinctions were made based on race. This group of men make up a large part of what the R's would refer to as the ones—with their families often —who don't want anything and would prevent the progress of others.

There was much talk among those of the street men who knew about the meetings through word of mouth, of the prospects for something good to come of them. The consensus was that there were certain individuals who had their own interests at heart--getting personal financial gain out of the rehabilitation of properties--and who would keep tight control of whatever power was to be had or advantage. Certainly the others weren't going to let anybody in who wasn't of their persuasion (religious, economic, social) or wasn't in their circle. "This is supposed to be an open meeting that's going to help the whole community, but they don't want us to come. They're going to do everything in their power to keep us out. They don't want to hear what we have to say." Implied in such statements was that the speakers were the ones with the truth in hand, the ones who really knew what was going on in the neighborhood, and the ones whose motivations were aboveboard—the ones "for the people."

The conversations prior to the meetings pointed toward some form of showdown or at least a heated debate. As it happened, the street dissidents never showed up, and the new group/old group factions bogged themselves down in discussions of agenda-priorities to the extent that the major issues never reached the floor. The meetings were moved from the more neutral territory of a gym to a church basement, and no notice was posted to the effect at the old meeting site. Printed notices evidently had been sent out "all around," although those who weren't members in some standing were never sent one. And I never saw a single notice posted around the neighborhood for casual perusal.

Subsequent meetings were held in the church basement, always with the sounds of choir practice or other religious meeting above, an atmosphere which lent its own form of control to the direction activities and discussions were likely to take in the basement. It was true also that the non-church elements, among whose numbers were potentially the most vociferous dissidents, were more likely to show up on neutral ground than in the church. Regardless, the move from gym to church marked the beginning of the end of participation of the new group. In its last appearance, one of its representatives read a statement which was politely worded except to say that the concerns of certain persons were not being taken into account. The authors of the statement then made some attempts to start an alternative organization, as they had tried initially, but the venture never got off the ground. It is worthwhile noting that a major reason the new organization never materialized was that nobody among its potential leadership wanted to go out "on front street"--that is, to expose themselves and their lifestyle to the kind of visibility that would be called for, especially considering that they would be acting in opposition to the established body and making themselves vulnerable to accusation and investigation.

Although much dissatisfaction was expressed, not only among the new dissidents, but among those who were long-time supporters of the old organization, of the way meetings were being conducted, this dissension was never aired in the meetings themselves. The meetings were always brief, dull (in the judgment of residents) and nonproductive. Dissent, when it was heard, was couched in such polite phrases and/or apologies that it could easily be ignored. In one instance, an elderly man who had been prominent in both school and community activities over many years mumbled privately that the president was pursuing an issue that no one was interested in. When he finally spoke out, his tone was respectful and apologetic: "I'm not bringing this up to create problems, and I don't know whether others feel the way I do, but I think we should take a vote on _____. Now, if my suggestion isn't worthwhile, just throw it out, but...." There were some stirrings among the members, and, assuming the stirrings meant disagreement, the gentleman added, "Well, if nobody else feels that way...well, just forget it." And the matter of a vote was ignored although several others had given reasons during the course of the meeting that the matter was unworkable and no one had expressed enthusiasm for it.

Meetings were always dominated by one or two individuals who, although they were genuinely dedicated to the building of a strong civic organization, prevented the kind of participation from others that would make the dream a reality. The motivating factors in the heavy-handedness, my observations led me to believe, were not so much greed and/or hunger for power, as fear of loss of control, fear of disruption, fear of energies that would eat away at, tear down, even the degree of cooperative action that had been achieved. The forces of destruction were always assumed to be at the door.

The fact is that for a while new life had been generated in the organization, after a period of six or seven years that, by the pastor-organizer's own admission, had been unpromising. The retreat of the new group signalled a retreat also by residents who were not outspoken but were privately in favor of a broader base of activity and who had begun attending meetings again only because the new group had given them hopes that the organization might become effective.

The factions who took interest in the revival of the civic organization can be described from several perspectives. The individuals who would not relinquish authoritative positions represent the old guard; they are churchgoers whose average age is some 20 or more years in advance of the other factions. They have lived in the neighborhood all or most of their lives, and they have seen movements come and movements go. Their attitude is protective, and they are most wary of destructive forces from within. They are knowing, and their cynicism in its way is an easy match of any displayed by the street people.

Their living is earned through traditional professions--they are teachers, preachers, social service workers and health care workers--and their assumption of leadership roles is justified by years of responsible residency. Their way is to work within the system and to appeal to it when grievances are felt (police, city management, service agencies) while they maintain considerable skepticism that those avenues of appeal will respond appropriately. Although the major elected representative of the area was invited to assist the process of making the proposal a live issue with city government, and although he was leaned upon for the sake of the means at his disposal, his presentation was met with by silent jeers--eye rolling, significant glances from one person to the other, and veiled smirking.

The old guard are stuck with the neighborhood for better or for worse--this is a matter both of genuine commitment and expediency--whereas the R's and the F's, and those liek the, have other options. In fact, the R's, in light of the failure of the civic group and some close-to-home experiences of the advance of civic blight, have recently moved out of the neighborhood into the suburbs. The F's have gone "underground"--that is, they have decided to pursue development of their own goals, making contacts on an individual basis within the neighborhood and avoiding group involvement.

The R's and the F's could be considered radicals because they were aggressive enough to create waves, to the extent of making preliminary steps toward formation of an alternative civic organization, which, if chartered, would supplant the other. The fact is that they preferred to work within a structure already established. The less vocal dissidents, who privately hoped the newcomers would succeed in altering the nature of the old organization, have retreated again into the posture originally represented by the R's, that of concentration upon their own block--there are at least two strong block organizations in the triangle--or participation in a more broadly based organization that would represent not only the triangle but two adjoining communities.

The other fixed-position group (in addition to the old guard) is that of the street people. They are the visible manifestation of the loss of control feared by everyone else--the wolf at the door from within the compound--the one element within the community who have no fear of a loss of control (their fear is more a fear of loss of turf or homeland). The control that must be maintained, from the perspective of this latter group, is that of privacy. They want to left alone because they believe they are the ones being ripped off. Their lifestyle in their own view has spirituality and commitment. They see themselves as being protectors of a different kind of tradition, one less contaminated and more culturally pure.

As of this writing, the civic organization seems to have returned to its former state, its productivity bogged down in the issue of the old proposal and uncertainty as to the responsiveness of a new city administration.

When asked why a few persons were allowed to dominate the organization, one resident answered, "Nobody wants to hurt the president's feelings or create problems for him; he's been around for a long time, and he means well."

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Reading and Writing and Community Organizations

In my conversations with heads of community organizations, pastors, owners of small businesses, and residents encountered casually--in the laundromat, restaurant, recreation center--there was always mentioned a "something else" that was seen to be essential before children could learn to read and write. The extra something took several forms, all related to the child's response to the learning environment and, by implication, perception of self. For one person, the key was "moral excellence"; reading and writing were important, but training in values--respect for one another, proper dress, respect for property, politeness towards adults, practice of religious faith--was presumed to be the prerequisite; in that view, expressed in various ways by others, instruction wasn't likely to be successful unless the values of sensitivity had been instilled, at which point reading and writing and study would flow as a natural enhancement.

Others mentioned discipline, in much the same way as parents. One organization head said that the "only way to teach Black children effectively is through a strict approach." He expressed that children were accustomed to freedom, which made them "exceptionally creative" but made it difficult for them to channel their creativity constructively, as they lacked "discipline and restraint." He felt also that values teaching must accompany other instruction but emphasized discipline as partner to concentration--"Reading and writing require a lot of discipline"--rather than as corollary to "manners"--"niceness and sitting up straight." A pastor, who was active in community affairs, expressed that overcoming disciplinary problems was the "key to getting down to basics." Similar sentiments were expressed by residents remembering the "strict and honorable" principal who was the first Black principal at Harriet Tubman.

One person, an advocate of improved opportunities for children to participate in organized sports, expressed that he believed it would be a serious mistake to downplay or neglect sports activities because of anxiety about reading and writing competencies: "If a child is coachable, he is teachable." The emphasis again was on children's acquiring a form of discipline that could transfer into other learning environments.

The word "discipline" was used interchangeably to refer both to ability to concentrate meaningfully on the task at hand and to the curbing of rambunctious behavior. The order that was implied was that the latter type of disciplining was necessary before the former type of discipline could be achieved.

There were varied expressions of people's concern about literacy and the young. At an open political rally, at which a mayoral candidate promised to "get rid of bums and get teachers" because the district's high schools graduated "functional illiterates," the audience applauded enthusiastically; and it was the only statement made by him that evening which drew applause. Pastors all asked if I knew of tutors; tutorial programs had a brief life because volunteer tutors often were not available. A homemade sign in the window of a "flat house" (low rise) in the projects asked for books to be donated so that a library could be set up in the community center that served the projects. Several men who frequented the grounds of one of the recreation centers wanted to set up a small library inside the center; the project, however, never got off the ground. A quick way to get a positive response from residents was to assert an interest in helping young people with reading and writing. Several neighborhood institutions offered space for such an undertaking. Both factions of a resident community organization were anxious to claim credit for interest in upgrading the skills of the youth of the area.

Community persons, as well as parents, always emphasized the practical applications of reading and writing and study. "People want to be able to pass tests, get the G.E.D., something they can see--get jobs." Another: "It's essential that children be taught in preparation for the real world, which makes certain demands, whether you want them or not. It's not what you want to do but what you have to do." Some statements were unconditional: "If you can't read, you're nothing." And: "The survival of Blacks depends on education."

It was considered dangerous, however, to be "too smart" if one wasn't also fully cognizant of one's circumstances; it was dangerous to become too abstract in one's thinking, or idealistic. Teachers, parents and residents told me stories about children who had been achievers in school but had not been able to blend their visions of what should have been with what was. Such children, as the stories went, became addicts or bums or mental patients. Regardless of school achievement, the children who "made it" were supposedly the ones who learned to analyze their surroundings--people and circumstances--and maneuver accordingly, to their own best advantage.

Structure and Tone. Whether the meetings I observed were religious, pastoral or community-action, there was serious concern about procedure. Parliamentary procedure was, in most instances, the point of departure in intent, whether it was actually practiced or not. There was always a structure, even if just "old business" and "new business" and "reports"; and if a matter was mentioned at the wrong time, the individual would be reminded that "old business" was still being addressed, or the like. Every meeting had a secretary who read aloud minutes of the last meeting or had minutes on hand to be read. When order was conceived to be lacking, there was someone or ones to remind individuals privately that the fault lay in the failure of the group to follow procedure. In one meeting, the chairman followed procedure to the point of, the members felt, squelching expression and dissent. In that instance, the members, none of whom were younger than thirty years of age, responded in much the same way youngsters might have in a classroom headed by an authoritarian teacher. There were jokes and guarded laughter and derogatory asides. The chairman chided one member for getting up to leave the room, without having requested and received the permission of the chair.

In another instance, the participants in a sports meeting shouted and interrupted one another. Although I was not actually present in the room, the noise level was so high that anyone on the floor could have heard. After the meeting, disgruntled members complained that nothing had been accomplished. One especially vocal member told the chairman that if parliamentary procedure were followed, the meetings would become ordered so that business could be accomplished. He also held up a sports rules book and expressed that certain issues would not arise if the book were referred to and studied. The tone of the business part of meetings I attended was always serious; individuals addressed one another respectfully; dissent was not usually openly expressed on the floor in spite of what the participants privately felt. In one instance, the chairman addressed for the better part of the meeting a subject that no one else appeared to be interested in, as there were no advocacy comments, only politely phrased reservations, poker-faced silences and grumbling asides made to companions. No closure was achieved regarding the issue; the time became late, and the matter was put aside for other matters. At another community meeting, residents made faces covertly, grunted and spoke in undertones of disparagement when a political figure made a presentation. Although members had appeared, prior to the meeting, to be ready to lock horns with the presenter, open comments were polite, even at times complimentary.

Structure and order were appreciated by residents as being desirables, as the only way of handling an occasion, whether the results were exactly to their liking or not, that is, whether or not they accomplished what they wanted to accomplish. In the two instances I encountered wherein order of procedure was subverted--the sports league meetings and, through the account of a member, the gardening association--the stated goals were achieved at least as visibly as in other community efforts. In fact, order sometimes prevented action, especially the action of dissent, by preventing issues from being aired.

Structured and controlled proceedings were appreciated in every established community context I encountered, whether educational or religious or recreational or civic. The head of a recreation center proudly asserted that children did not "run in and out" of the building and that there was no room available in the building for unsupervised activities. My observations supported his claim. A church hall had been closed for indoor sports use because the children who used it had not been "properly supervised."

Observations within a Church. The church selected to be observed was one of a few churches in the triangle with a dependable core of youth participation. Children from Harriet Tubman were active in many of its programs, particularly special programs; children from the neighborhood were more apt to participate in special events sponsored by the church, such as a block party, rather than regularly attend Sunday school.

In the Sunday-school class for children of pre-reading ages, the teacher asked preparatory questions about the lesson such as, "What does it mean to be blind?" then read the text aloud. Afterwards teacher and children discussed the pictures, and she repeated the question, "What does it mean to be blind?" Then she asked, "Have you ever seen a blind person?" "Haven't you seen a person with a dog in a harness, waiting to cross the street?" She then summarized by having the children role play: "Close your eyes and pretend you're blind." After the lesson, the children colored pictures related to the story.

For children, aged seven to nine, the Sunday-school materials consisted of workbooks that featured text followed by tests: letters to be unscrambled, true-and-false exercises, underlining of correct answers, filling in of blanks and yes/no-answer questions. The children read the text silently and discussion followed. The teacher examined the children's answers and encouraged them to re-read the materials aloud in order to find the correct answers. Then the teacher asked literal comprehension questions, as well as such evaluative questions as, "How did the man feel? How did the people feel?"

The format of Sunday-school literature for adults included appropriate Bible references, paraphrase and/or summary of biblical materials, discussion, and questions for critical thinking.

Church leaders promoted "study and research" as opposed to intuitive spirituality. The pastor called it "study as opposed to insight." The Sunday-school teacher said to his adult class, "The only way to grow in Christ is by prayer and study. We must study."

Study was also stressed by the leader/teacher of a class of persons in a church training institute, with a touch of humor: "The Lord called me to give me my message. But you got to go further than that today." As part of requirements, students wrote research papers.

Church leaders were sensitive about the impact of the literature they used in Sunday-school classes for children and adults. There was an issue as to whether the national church literature should be used or commercially prepared church-school literature. National church materials were thought to be provincial, not speaking to a variety of situations and lifestyles. On the other hand, other literature had to be adapted for the sake of practical application. During a summer church-school convention that included members from a number of churches in the district, materials were discussed. One suggestion was that individual churches might purchase parts of sets of materials to supplement what was being used. Programmed materials were discussed as a possiblity "so that the leader knows something different to do each Sunday."

The instructional approach generally was that the leader of the Sunday-school class followed the plan of the day's passage, then at the conclusion of the lesson created examples from everyday life to support the message and make its impact one that would be relevant within the context of the members' lives.

As the pastor stated, what the church needed was "literature all children can identify with" and "clarity in message and application."

In the interest of clarity, the minister used several versions of the Bible in teaching the weekday, adult Bible class. Members read a passage in the various translations before discussing its meaning and relevance. Misreadings or mispronunciations were ignored unless they were flagrant, in which case the word or phrase was supplied by the pastor or someone else. The pastor advised members to "get a Living Bible because the language is so much clearer--you can get a clearer understanding of what the Bible is about. But keep the King James version for the poetry."

The pastor led the meetings. As in adult church-school meetings, which were taught by someone other than the pastor, members voluntarily responded to questions or participated in other ways (prayer, songs, readings) although it was occasionally the practice of the leader to single out a member for participation: "Mrs. ____, we haven't heard from you this morning."

In the course of one presentation/discussion, the minister asked the difference between "opinion and judgment" and between the "perfect and the permissive" will of God. In response to the passage, "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1,2), the minister asked one of several rhetorical questions, "What profits the Jew over other nations?" and answered, "The Jew has the Word." A second rhetorical question was, "How many love their neighbors as themselves?" followed by examples of what loving oneself and not loving oneself means--his own overeating as not loving himself; a man's being "drunk as a snake" as not being self-loving. At the end of the lesson the pastor spoke of the "community of all religions" in that "all have the golden rule."

The paster had advanced theology degrees and was self-consciously concerned about not speaking too abstractly or theoretically from the pulpit and in classes. He expressed to me that he tried at the beginning of his sermons to present ideas in a way that would appeal to the more educated members and then to become specific in practical ways at the end of the sermon. He spoke jokingly of times that he had "gotten too far out there and couldn't get back" in time to close the sermon on the note he preferred. He said that he geared his sermons to a fourth-grade reading level, though by that he said he meant "vocabulary and not ideas."

There was recognition within the church that some members' reading was not as fluent as could be desired. In a gathering of pastors, it was agreed that laymen sometimes had difficulty reading a scriptural passage handed to them cold and that persons selected for readings at an upcoming occasion should be given the passages in time to practice reading so that the event would progress smoothly and no one would suffer embarrassment. Church announcements were always read from the pulpit by a layman although the material appeared on the mimeographed order of the service that each person held. The reading acknowledged that many might neglect to read the material and served as well to support the performance uses of reading, as will be discussed in the Summary. From the pulpit the pastor announced one Sunday that a certain member had become a deacon, having passed the training courses as well as the written and oral exams. "We all knew him," said the pastor, "when he could hardly read the Decalogue."

At the assembly following the meeting of Sunday-school classes, the pastor complimented the children on having found the Books of the Bible quickly as he had called them out, then complimented the children on their "good ability to read."

The pastor used multi-syllabic words, along with synonyms--"reiterate, repeat, say again"--or a definition, "You don't need to editorialize--you don't need to say anything." Also, he used slang expressions or Black English at times to undercut his own knowledge and/or use of words, sometimes betraying a self-consciousness not so much helpful to listeners as demonstrating his anxiety about seeming learned: "...biologically, anthropologically--all them things," or "You may not have studied Greek and all that stuff--those of us who studied it have forgotten it..." Or in a sermon he might preface a reference by saying, "There was a fellow named Bonhoeffer who said...."

The conclusions of his sermons were done in the repetitious, elaborate, half-chanting style that is a trademark of the Black preacher. In view of the pastor's comments about becoming practical and concrete at the conclusion of the sermon, it seems reasonable to question whether the intention behind repetition, in the minds of those who engage in it, is not so much to be poetic as to establish or ensure clarity.

Summer Bible school was taught by a member/teacher from the public schools, though not from Harriet Tubman. Children were divided into classes based on age groupings, as in Sunday school, and the teacher presented a lesson to be read aloud by the children or by herself, depending on the age of the children, followed by questions and comments. Afterwards there was a period for songs and instruments--bells and sticks and tambourines--and for art and special projects. The attitude towards and handling of children's behavior was much the same as traditionally in public schools: "I called on you to receive an instrument because you're sitting quietly" with perhaps an adaptation, as in the following: "You are the light of the world--what that means is that the way you behave shows what kind of person you are."

More of the children were from the immediate neighborhood than the usual Sunday-school population. Teachers were more likely to be non-residents of the community than were counselors, who were residents.

Young children performed set writing tasks, as in a take-home letter to mothers: "God loves you and so does (child's name)." Teachers or counselors did the writing for children who were having difficulty. Closing day activities consisted mainly of readings (roughly 85 percent)--Bible passages and materials from church literature. The pre-teens told

Bible stories and gave interpretations of the stories. Children held posters with written messages and illustrations--presentations, except for content, much like many of the presentations made on assembly days by children at Harriet Tubman.

The devotional segment of the church-school convention, which was attended by representatives of churches in the district, featured songs and reading aloud of Scriptures by children. When volunteers to "speak for the Lord" were requested, young and old recited Bible verses from memory. In other church assemblies, a call for such a witness typically drew a like response: the recitation of Bible verses.

A significant feature of the convention was the selection of a Youth of the Year from among the churches present. There were two contestants, both teen-aged girls. Selection was based on the following: (1) answers to questions about the church (written exam)--50 percent weight; (2) resume written by contestant, providing evidence of contributions to church, school and community--25 percent; and (3) talent presentation--25 percent. As talent presentation, one contestant sang a capella, and the other read a paper she had written. The young woman who read the paper was the contest winner.

Constituents of varying bodies--religious, civic and recreational--valued written accounts, whether letters or other documents, for substantiation, clarification and validation of procedures. Minutes of the meeting were essential routinely. Other examples include the following:

The constitution of an organized body had been revised by a committee, which then presented the changes before the full assembly for approval. The designated committee member began reading the suggested changes and was interrupted by a member who objected that there were no copies available for members to have in hand during the reading. The comment was that the revision was "too important to be read rote as if we're in school." After somewhat heated discussion, the decision was made that the matter should be set aside until the committee could provide copies of both the original and revised versions for consideration.

A written proposal for funds was a factor of contention in another setting. Regardless as to assurances of the content of the proposal by members who had submitted it years earlier, much suspicion was engendered among a segment of the membership because the actual papers were not available for examination. The nonavailability of the papers was interpreted as avoidance by the newer members whereas the others felt that a verbal presentation should have been sufficient. The withholding of the document as well as the insistence upon seeing it were evidence of the significance of the written materials for both factions.

A civic organization sent out flyers to announce date and location of meetings. On two occasions the information on the flyers was in contradiction to the verbal announcements made at the prior meetings.

Although, on both occasions, persons who tried to attend had missed the meetings or nearly missed them because no notice had been posted on the door of the old location and those persons had neglected to read the flyer, the officers defended themselves by insisting that the flyers represented sufficient notice, whether read or not.

An organization's membership voted whether to send a letter or make a telephone call to an elected official. The majority voted in favor of the letter. Letters sent out from the body were read to the membership by officers, as well as letters received. Regarding the appropriateness of calls and letters, when the issue arose, consensus among members in the meetings I attended was that the most thorough way to proceed was to do both: call and write. Calling was a last-minute reminder or a warm-up act for the official act (the letter) which was to follow. Residents produced letters as proof regarding matters considered too important to be without written verification: e.g., a request for improvements to be made on the grounds of a recreation center as well as the official response; a series of letters retained over the years as proof of official city responses during changing administrations to a proposal for housing rehabilitation; the text of an open letter, read aloud at a meeting because the contents were considered too sensitive to be accounted for extemporaneously, announcing a membership split.

* * * *

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SCHOOL

> We accept the challenge that because of many things, we are referred to as an "innercity school." But we take this as a challenge. We invite anyone to visit our school, because we can prove to you that it doesn't matter where you live---that with the proper encouragement either at home or at school, and with the materials which we strive so hard to get from the Board of Education or from our Home and School, that we can teach children - that whatever you conceive in your brain and believe in your heart, you can achieve. Our favorite quotes are "Believe in Yourself" and "You are Somebody." We are very proud of our school---at least I am as a teacher." —— Mrs. Gray

Harriet Tubman began under another name in 1846 as a predominantly White school in an integrated neighborhood in West Metropolis. There were so few Blacks attending the school at that time that they comprised no more than one or two students in a classroom.

In subsequent decades, the percentage of Blacks in the neighborhood and school increased to such a great extent that the Metropolis School District decided to experiment with having segregated classrooms within the school. The rationale for segregating the school was that (1) Black students, having recently arrived in Metropolis from inferior all-Black schools in the South, were unable to "keep up" with the White students who had been educated in Metropolis schools; (2) White parents would object to having their children attend class with large numbers of Black students; (3) Black parents, in fact, preferred that their children attend school with "their own"; and (4) since Black teachers were permitted to teach only Black students, the Black community appreciated the employment opportunities that opened up for Black teachers when an entire school became Black.

The experiment of having segregated Black classrooms within the

Harriet Tubman School --- rather than going to the trouble of making the entire school Black --- did not "work out," and in 1920 Harriet Tubman became a segregated Black school with Miss Sylvia Chapin, a Black woman, as its principal. The faculty changed from all White to all Black. The neighborhood of the school remained White lower-middle class integrated with upper-middle-class Blacks. But when the school became Harriet Tubman, a segregated Black school, the White students who still remained in the school were transferred to the predominantly White schools in the area, and Black students were transferred in from surrounding integrated schools.

Most of the existing teaching practices and traditions of the school began with Miss Chapin. She exerted a heavy influence on the Harriet Tubman School during the decades that she served as its principal. A curriculum leader as well as a disciplinarian---she ran a tight ship. She spent long days in the school; she arrived before anyone else, and was always the last to leave. She never married, and many say that she made the Harriet Tubman School her entire life.

Since Black teachers were unofficially "not permitted" to teach White students, until 1955 there were two separate lists of teachers eligible for employment: one White and one Black. The teachers at the Harriet Tubman School say that until 1955, the faculty was entirely Black; there "was never even a White substitute teacher in the school."

Miss Chapin was in constant contact with her teaching staff, making rounds to all the classrooms daily, often taking over lessons and demonstrating alternate ways of teaching. In those days, the teachers' union was not a source of contention for an authoritarian curriculum leader, and Harriet Tubman teachers had no recourse other than to quietly accept Miss Chapin's sometimes heavy-handed methods for correcting teaching techniques.

Harriet Tubman teachers soon learned to value rather than resent Miss Chapin's spells of over-exuberance, however, when they realized that she asked of them nothing that she was not already contributing herself---and twofold. In addition to formally sharing and reinforcing effective teaching techniques in regular inservice meetings, Miss Chapin routinely collected and commented on teachers' weekly lesson plans. She kept abreast of the research and theory communicated in the leading educational journals of her time, and shared and discussed these ideas with teachers on an individual basis. "You knew she had read and thought about these articles herself," teachers who knew her volunteered, because she always discussed them with you."

Miss Chapin, those who worked with her say, "left nothing to chance." There was unity in the way everything was done in the school: what textbooks would be used, what the criteria would be for giving grades, how records would be kept. Teacher committees worked together on establishing these procedures. There was an established curriculum and a traditional daily routine that was followed in every classroom. Each day began with morning assembly, followed by oral sharing, spelling, and reading. Compositions were written daily and homework was copious and routinely assigned.

Miss Chapin encouraged a "pal system" among teachers. A senior teacher usually took a new teacher under her wing and "showed her the ropes," indoctrinating her to how things were done in the Harriet Tubman School. Throughout the school year they would share successful teaching techniques and provide mutual support.

Sylvia Chapin also believed in homogeneous grouping, and in a teacher's keeping the same class for two years, unless the teacher was not strong enough to command this kind of structure. In her day, the vast majority of the teachers were, indeed, strong enough, however. Many believe the teachers in Miss Chapin's day were carefully screened before being selected to work at the Harriet Tubman School. Because of Miss Chapin's reputation for excellence, a teaching position in her school was highly sought after.

The teaching staff under the leadership of Sylvia Chapin was composed primarily of middle-class women who had been educated in the best Black colleges and normal schools. They were strict, proper, conservative women, who like Miss Chapin, were single and often dedicated their entire lives to the students in the Harriet Tubman School. And also, like Miss Chapin, they lived within the Harriet Tubman triangle and thus had close ties with their students' parents. Many believe these close ties kept discipline problems to a minimum, since students knew that if they misbehaved, their parents---indeed, the entire Black community---would be told and be horrified.

A good education was highly valued in the Black community, and children were taught that they had better not "act out" in school. The teachers at the Harriet Tubman School, with Sylvia Chapin at their helm, were respected domos of the community. Miss Chapin inspired steadfast dedication in the teachers who worked with her. She was a strong, frank authoritarian leader who was able to "make people do what she knew they could."

Under Miss Chapin's guidance, instruction was rigorous---students became proficient scholars of Black history and the classics in literature, they became eloquent and poised speakers, and model students who followed a dress code and exhibited such impeccable middle-class manners that, the legend says, it was easy to recognize that they were products of the Harriet Tubman School.

At Harriet Tubman, students were taught to treasure the opportunities they were given to stretch their minds. Miss Chapin gave books as rewards, and instilled in the student body a zeal for learning. From the 1920's through the 1950's, in city-wide competition with all schools, both White and Black, Harriet Tubman students won numerous awards in academic endeavors, in debate, and in the creative arts. Over the four decades that Miss Chapin worked as principal of the school, Harriet Tubman became known as a school with a "tradition of excellence," and she became a living legend as its leader.

In 1957, Miss Chapin retired. A third of the faculty that still taught at the Harriet Tubman School in 1980 were present at her emotional retirement dinner. Mrs. Gray was there, and a young, Black gym teacher named Howard Best, who had attended the school as a child, gave the appreciation speech and retirement gifts to Miss Chapin. It was at that time that Miss Chapin whispered to Mr. Best that he would one day be principal of the Harriet Tubman School. He had always been her "favorite" and she had seen something in him that he had not yet recognized in himself. One year later, Mr. Best went on to become the administrative assistant at a school three blocks away.

Mrs. Viola Grant followed Miss Chapin as the principal of the Harriet Tubman School. She had been the principal of the Jamison School, an integrated elementary school in North Metropolis, and had been a colleague of Miss Chapin's. For two years, Mrs. Grant struggled to maintain the high standards that had been set by her predecessor. Then in 1960, Mrs. Grant's husband was tragically killed in an automobile accident. This severe blow, coupled with drastic changes in the population of the school and its community, kept Mrs. Grant from having the strong will and energy necessary to continue the tradition of excellence over the next ten years.

There is a large underground creek that runs through the Harriet Tubman triangle. In 1955, the city government forced the residents living immediately over this underground creek to leave their homes so that the land under them could be secured. In order to secure this land, blocks and blocks of neatly-kept houses had to be torn down. My great aunt and great uncle, then over seventy years old, were among those who were forced to leave their homes. The City offered them poor alternative housing and the ordeal left them bitter and depressed. They both died less than two years later, brokenhearted from having to leave what had been their home for over forty-five years.

The City tore down their pride and joy and by 1981 - 26 years later - had build nothing in its place. The huge, four-block-square vacant lot remains a dump, an appalling reminder of the blatant injustice many have suffered.

. . . .

In 1960, the Hillside Public Housing Projects were built in the center of the triangle. With them came a different breed of Harriet Tubman student --- much less genteel and indoctrinated to middle-class values. Their parents were younger, and usually there was only the mother present in the home.

These parents had much less reverence for teachers and frequently confronted them --- defending their children, saying that they had been unjustly disciplined. Mrs. Grant often committed the lethal faux pas of siding with the parents during these encounters, since it took less energy and the parents were often fierce adversaries.

Following her husband's death, Mrs. Grant began spending limited time in the school, frequently arriving after school was in session and departing before the end of the school day. Inservice meetings ceased, as well as the frequent contact with the principal to which Harriet Tubman teachers had become accustomed. The principal now spent most of the day cloistered in her office.

The feeling of being a part of a team subsided under the principalship of Mrs. Grant. Teachers complain that, when she was their principal, there was no distribution of power, that all decisions, no matter how small, had to be made bv her. She had to feel that she was "the boss," they say, and oftentimes problems remained unsolved, since the task of running everything, rather than decentralizing the decision-making, became an overwhelming one. As a consequence, discipline problems became rampant.

Under Miss Chapin's guidance, Harriet Tubman had been very much a community-based school, with a strong PTA. Consistently, parents had participated heavily in school activities such as May Day, the annual Christmas Party, and graduation. But in the years following Miss Chapin's departure, this parent participation dwindled.

The dress code and other decades-old traditions were eventually abandoned. Parents who were older residents of the triangle were appalled at the changes that were occurring in the school. Traditionally, they had looked to the school to be a never-changing rock of consistency and excellence. Now it was letting them down. In their opinion, the end of the dress code symbolized the decline of the Harriet Tubman tradition of excellence.

In spite of the changes in the school's administration and student population, the excellent teaching staff, that Miss Chapin had personally trained, struggled to maintain the status quo within their individual classrooms. In the four years subsequent to Miss Chapin's retirement, however, one-third of the faculty, having grown old along with her, followed her into retirement. Many good teachers took their place, but the faculty, lacking the strong leadership of a Miss Chapin, quickly lost ground, and student achievement declined.

In 1970 Mrs. Grant retired, and Howard Best was appointed principal of the Harriet Tubman School. He had grown up in the Harriet Tubman triangle and had attended the school when Miss Chapin was its principal. Some of the faculty members still present in the school in 1970 had been his teachers. Miss Chapin and the teachers he encountered at Harriet Tubman when he was a student there had made a deep and lasting impression on him and he had grown up feeling great pride in having had the opportunity to matriculate at the Harriet Tubman School.

His first teaching assignment was at Harriet Tubman, where he spent six years as a physical education teacher under the principalships of both Miss Chapin and Mrs. Grant. He left his assignment at Harriet Tubman to become administrative assistant in charge of discipline at another elementary school which is adjacent to the Harriet Tubman triangle.

After six years in this position, he was appointed Director of Federal Programs for the Metropolis School District. This fortuitous position allowed him to gain the inside track on all federal programs for which schools could qualify. It also provided him with the opportunity to form lasting relationships with those who headed most of the departments in the school system.

Howard Best felt he had three obstacles to overcome in accepting his new role as principal of the Harriet Tubman School:

1. A third of the faculty had been present in the school when he was a student there. Indeed, some of them had been his teachers.

2. Many of the faculty members were his peers; they had been his co-workers when he was a physical education teacher.

3. The faculty was no longer working as a team as it had when Miss Chapin was its principal, and now had several factions within it: the old versus the young, the many Blacks in the school versus the few Whites, who had formed a tight clique. In addition the formation of the teachers' union was being discussed and teachers were divided in their sentiments regarding this.

He met first with the faculty, reminding them of his close ties with the school and underlining his commitment to helping the school regain its tradition of excellence. He told them he believed the teachers, students, and parents of the Harriet Tubman School were members of a family. And he told them he believed that restoring its tradition of excellence was as important to them as it was to him. He received their overwhelming support in mapping out a plan that would make their school a source of pride once again. He invited retired teachers to help with the planning, and they, equally inspired by the school's rich history, welcomed this call for assistance.

The same year that Mr. Best became principal of Harriet Tubman a system-wide mandate charged all principals with the mission of boosting reading achievement within each of their schools. Howard Best communicated this mandate to his staff and together they decided that they would work towards this goal by concentrating on restoring discipline and teaching the basics: reading and mathematics.

Best drew heavily on his background as administrative assistant in charge of discipline and his military training in re-establishing student discipline in the school. Rules were established in meetings with teachers and conveyed to students both verbally and in writing to their parents. These structures set down in his continuing communications with parents and the student body quickly re-established order. A measure that secured the re-establishment of order was the steady presence Best maintained in the school, assuring teachers that students who presented discipline problems should be sent to him. After one such visit, only the most severe discipline problems felt like "acting out" again.

Mrs. Gray, primary teacher:

"Mr. Best is a strong disciplinarian...and I might say that part of this may come from his military training. He has been in the Army, with the National Guard. Some people may feel that we have a strict discipline code. But in the innercity, many children lack discipline. Many of them come from homes where they have to fend for themselves all day long. And, since life is an alternative, you must get a little of both, so you can make a choice. So, if you have the freedom at home and come to school with a certain amount of discipline, you can evaluate which is better for you to perform. So I'm all in favor of the discipline."

Mrs. Randolph, primary teacher:

When Mr. Best came on board as our principal, he was all over the place, you could not hear a sound in any classroom. He's always been a strong disciplinarian. I've always felt as though if I had a problem with a student about discipline, that I could take the student to him and the problem would be alleviated. When Mr. Best came, the entire school fell in line. He had total control. All I have to do to alleviate discipline problems in my classroom is tell them they'll have to go to Mr. Best's office and they would calm down.

Best set up weekly assemblies for students which were run by his teachers. In a move to reinstate the old dress code begun by Miss Chapin --- a move that was agreed upon by both teachers and parents alike --- the elementary students were required to come to school "dressed" on the days when they would be attending these assemblies. Girls were to wear skirts or dresses, and boys were to wear shirts and ties. During these assemblies students performed plays, often in elaborate costume, gave recitations, and frequently sang the Black National Anthem. Mr. Best always came forward and thanked the teachers and children at the end of these assemblies for their efforts and invariably offered some words with the purpose of further motivating the students.

Parents figured heavily in the resuscitation of the Harriet Tubman School. When Howard Best became principal, there were no parents involved in the school in any capacity. In his initial meetings with teachers, he discovered that they shared his conviction that parents working in and with the school would serve as a stabilizing force for the student body.

As one of his first tasks, he sent out letters to all parents requesting their attendance at a general meeting. In this letter entitled, "We're In Trouble, We Need Your Help," he introduced himself as a returning member of the Harriet Tubman family and asked for their support in helping their children achieve. He enlisted the help of his faculty in rifling through student information cards to find out which students had parents who had attended Harriet Tubman. At least 60% of the parents fit this description and special letters were sent to them, in which Mr. Best dwelled more heavily on the school's rich history.

The auditorium was filled at this initial meeting with parents. The present faculty, retired teachers, and droves of parents attended. Mr. Best reminded his audience of the tradition of excellence that had become associated with the school when Miss Chapin was its leader. He told them of his intention to return the school to those golden days when the Harriet Tubman student was literate, polished, and excelled in academic endeavors. He told them that, with their help, all of this was possible.

With these statements, Howard Best pushed a button that released a flood of emotion throughout the audience. Students would again achieve. Discipline would be restored. Harriet Tubman would regain its reputation for excellence. He received a standing ovation.

At that initial meeting, and thereafter, Best made parents feel that the school could not work without their assistance. He established the role of "Class Mother" and set out to fill that slot with a parent volunteer in every classroom. The Parents' Advisory Board was formed to serve as a liason between the school and the community, and the Home and School Association became a burgeoning force. After that initial meeting, parents became heavily involved in the school as both volunteer and paid aides, and they began to enthusiastically participate in parent-school activities.

Best believes he was able to win the active support of parents by making them realize how important their role was, by making them feel welcome in the school at all times, and by making them realize that he respected them each as individuals. As parents began working in the school and coming in contact with Mr. Best, they told others the good news, and more parents followed. As Mr. Best says:

> Parents have been pushed down for so long; they've been made to feel like they're zeros. I include parents in planning. There are now some 25-30 parents who work in this school everyday on either a paid or volunteer basis. They get the true picture of what we're about here, and they spread the word.

Even more important than the fact that parents were once again participating in school activities and working in the school, was the re-establishment of a bond between the home and school, further melded by the common, emotionally-laden goal of returning Harriet Tubman to its "golden days." To keep everyone on the track of achieving this goal, Mr. Best communicated continually with parents. At the beginning of each school year, he sent a letter to parents explaining the general guidelines of the school:

HARRIET TUBMAN SCHOOL

Dear Parents:

We are taking this opportunity to welcome you and your child to the beginning of a new school year. In order for this year to be a complete success, your understanding and cooperation with the following important guidelines is of great importance:

GUIDELINES FOR THE 1971 - 1972 SCHOOL YEAR

1. *All children must be in the yard before the ringing of the bell at 8:45 A.M. and 12:45 P.M.*
2. *A note must be sent to the teacher after each absence.*
3. *Lost textbooks and library books must be paid for.*
4. *Students in grades 1 through 4 are required to have a hard-back stitched copy book.*

   Loose leaf books are required for students in grades 5 through 8.
5. *All students should bring sharpened pencils everyday.*
6. *Parents are requested to review and sign all homework assignments.*
7. *Please make every effort to visit your child's teacher early in the school year. Parent-teacher conferences are by appointment only, and all visitors are asked to stop in the school office before visiting the classrooms.*
8. *Good grooming is important. Please see that your child is neat and clean each day.*
9. *Physical Education (dress requirements)*

   Girls: sneakers, socks, gym suits or shorts and blouse
   Boys: sneakers, socks, gym shorts and T-shirt
10. *Lunch: Students who eat lunch in school are required to remain in the school yard at lunchtime.*

SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

1. *Daily homework in every subject must be reviewed and signed by the parent each day.*
2. *Supplies: Loose leaf, ruler, pen, pencil, textbooks - All must be brought to school daily.*

3. *Any student failing three or more major subjects at the end of the school year will be retained in his present grade. This policy will be adhered to.*

We do look forward to a year of close relationship between the Home and School. Information concerning membership in our Home and School Association will be sent to you shortly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Howard Best
Principal

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN BY TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1971

To the Principal:

I have read and understand the above stated guidelines.

I will make every effort to see that they are strictly adhered to.

- -

(Pupil's Name) ____________________

(Room No.) ________

(Parent's Signature) __________________________

* * *

Periodically, parents were sent letters explaining how they could help their children achieve:

HARRIET TUBMAN SCHOOL

A Message to Parents and Guardians:

You can join in partnership with us here at the Harriet Tubman School by helping your child to develop fine habits of:

Good Health

1. *Proper eating habits*
   A full breakfast of fruit, cereal and milk
   Plenty of sunshine and fresh air
2. *Plenty of rest - Getting to bed on time*
3. *Proper care of hair, teeth and eyes*

Cleanliness

1. *Clean bodies and clothing*
2. *Dressed properly for all types of weather*

Courtesy

1. *Fine manners*
2. *Practice at home, in school and in the community*

Cooperation

1. *Is willing to work at worthwhile tasks in school and out*
2. *Sticks to a task until it is done*

Promptness

1. *Arrive on time at 8:45 and 1:10 ready for work*
2. *Complete assigned work on time*
3. *Be in the proper place at the proper time.*

Friendliness

1. *Looks upon his playmate or neighbor as a friend*
2. *Learns to settle his differences without fighting*
3. *Seeks the help of an adult in solving personal problems*

Respect for authority

1. *Follows rules set up by the group in school, at home and in the community*

Thrift

1. Saves a part of his earnings or allowance
2. Conserves materials, clothing, food and equipment

Volunteer Services

Feel free to visit at any time, plan to give at least a day's service to us. There are many ways that you can help. Training is furnished through the school system for many of these services. We need you.

Let us together, by teaching in school and through example in the home, make our children see that our aims are the same.

Howard Best
Principal

Whenever a problem with a student arose, Mr. Best's first, knee-jerk reaction was to contact the home.

"Mr. Best, Conrad Baines and William Brown are in your office," Mrs. Haines, his secretary would tell him. "They were fighting in the schoolyard."

"Get their parents on the phone," Mr. Best would invariably say. "They'll be really interested to hear about this."

Usually, within minutes after receiving the call, the parent of each of the children would arrive in the school to discuss the problem. As you will see in *How Parents View the School*, parents did not always agree with Mr. Best's strictness, but they shared his goals intensely. They also appreciated the fact that their children were achieving at Harriet Tubman, and they wanted them to continue to do so.

Each morning in the schoolyard parents gathered around Mr. Best for short conferences while he supervised the students' entrance into the building. These brief conferences were accompanied by familiar exchanges and laughter. Howard Best had an easy rapport with the parents of his students. His easy "way with people," coupled with the fact that he had attended Harriet Tubman and had grown up in the triangle, made this an easy matter.

Mrs. Mercer, kindergarten teacher:

"I don't think I've ever seen a parent that he hasn't been able to calm down or talk with. Most of the time, he just has a way with people that helps when parents come in upset. He's very diplomatic and charming, which is what you need to be when dealing with a parent."

With Mr. Best at their helm restoring discipline, with parents in the school serving as a stabilizing force, and with this new concentration on improving reading, student achievement at Harriet Tubman gradually progressed. By 1980, the majority of students in grades one through four were reading at or above the national norm, according to standardized reading tests. According to informal reading inventories administered in the same year under the supervision of the Metropolis School District's reading staff, the majority of students in the entire elementary school were reading on grade-level.

Academic Beginnings at the Harriet Tubman School

Serious teaching of the basic subjects begins in kindergarten. Students are homogeneously grouped before entering kindergarten, then grouped within each kindergarten class based on their skills in reading and math. Throughout the school year, as their achievement changes, students are regrouped.

Kindergarten children work on developmental puzzles and other manipulatives that have the objective of developing their thinking skills. They build intricate structures with blocks of varying shapes and sizes, with the warning to challenge their skills and not build "baby" structures, such as a three-car train.

Mrs. Mercer walks around, giving individual attention to the children: "That's too easy for you to do," she may say to one student, "That's not something that makes your brain work." To another student she may say, "That's a great structure! And do you know why it stays up? Because it has a good foundation. A good foundation." About another student she would say, "Look what he did. He wrote these sentences all by himself and he didn't have to do it; he just wanted to do it!"

Children are expected to speak in clear, complete sentences beginning in kindergarten. Mrs. Mercer would often tell a reticent child to say the words and not motion --- or to extend a one-word answer into a complete sentence. Simple modelling on the teacher's part of what a sentence is and helpful hints such as "don't begin with 'because'" and "If Mr. Best came in her right now and heard you just say 'wagon', he wouldn't know what you were talking about, would he?" were usually steps Mrs. Mercer took to get the children to speak rather consistently in sentences. This behavior was consistently encouraged and rewarded. The children earned dots in kindergarten and points later on in some of the primary-grade classrooms for using sentences and for being able to clearly and concisely summarize ideas. Kindergarten children in Mrs. Mercer's class wear ice-cream cones around their necks covered with circles which are colored-in when points are earned.

The students at Harriet Tubman begin receiving daily homework assignments in kindergarten and are often asked to compose sentences. Teachers expect parents to help with this. In parent workshops federally-funded through the Follow-Through Program, kindergarten teachers at Harriet Tubman work with parents in helping them learn how to assist their children with these home assignments. Homework assignments must be completed regularly and signed by a parent even if this is difficult to accomplish. Students learn early that this is their responsibility.

Mrs. Mercer the kindergarten teacher whose class parents clamor to get their children enrolled in, has two parent meetings a year that she deems important enough for parents to take off work, if necessary, to attend. She gets almost perfect attendance at this meeting---31 out of 33 parents attended the September, 1980 meeting, and this was typical. How does she get parents to come? She carries their phone numbers home with her and calls them between 7 and 9 o'clock at night. She tells them how important the meeting is, that someone must be there to represent their child, and that she purposely limits her meetings to only two a year to make it possible for all parents to attend. Mrs. Mercer keeps in constant contact with parents throughout the school year, reminding them of special services that are provided by the government that will improve their children's health and acquisition of literacy. So, when she takes parents' names and telephone numbers home to call them about this special meeting, some of them are already on her list to call to, perhaps, remind them that their children have to get mumps shots, and to explain where the shots can be obtained.

Communication with the home is an on-going phenomenon in kindergarten at Harriet Tubman, as it is in succeeding grades but with less intensity. Outside of Mrs. Mercer's kindergarten classroom doors are newspaper clippings that parents can read while they wait to take their children home. Mothers sit on the long, brown, wooden bench, read the clippings, and chat with each other. Sometimes mothers share their responses to Mrs. Mercer's teaching, talking of how well their children are doing, some perhaps defending or criticizing her strictness. Having to pick up their children forces continuous contact between parents and the kindergarten teachers. And the fact that they are depended upon to help with homework assignments serves to unify the parents, the majority of whom live within the triangle, even if slightly across the school's boundaries. Often the parents will call each other and then call the parent volunteer who works in Mrs. Mercer's classroom to find out how to help their children do the assignment.

An excerpt from one of the newsletters Mrs. Mercer sends home about six times during the school year, sums up her philosophy regarding parental help:

HARRIET TUBMAN SCHOOL

Kindergarten Newsletter

Mrs. Mercer
Rm. 101

Dear Parents:

I was so proud of your children at the Academy of Natural Sciences. They listened well, followed directions, and thought about the questions before raising their hands. Mr. Martinez, the museum teacher, said that it was a pleasure to teach them! We learned many interesting things about Animal Families. See how many your child can tell you. They will bring home the experience story we wrote. See how many words they know. Please try to keep all the experience stories we do in a folder at home until June. This encourages reading.

TESTING

During the whole month of February there will be city wide testing in the schools. The kindergarten children will be given the Stanford Early Achievement Test. Please do not pressure the children about this testing. We have told them that we are going to do some learning games. They will do much better if they are relaxed. If you have any questions about the testing please come in to see me. It is very important that the children are here every day unless they are sick in bed. If they do not finish all the test, it will pull down their scores.

VOLUNTEERS

WE NEED YOUR HELP! We need at least one parent a day to help work in our class during the testing. This will enable us to carry on the regular routine of our day. I cannot teach Reading, Math and Handwriting in 3 groups unless I have a parent to help. Anytime you can give, even 1 or 2 hours a week, will be appreciated.

WOODWORK

The children have begun to use the woodwork bench. Only two children can work at a time and it usually takes 2 to 3 days to complete their projects. They use wood, saws, hammers, and nails with my supervision. When your child brings home his work, please praise him.

COOKING

We will try to have a cooking experience about every two weeks. On February 12th, we will make red jello for our valentines party. If you would like to send a box to school that day we will appreciate it.

SHOW & TELL DAY

Every Tuesday the children may bring something of interest to school to show the class. This encourages speaking in front of the group and speaking in sentences.

PRESIDENTS DAY

School will be closed on Monday, February 16th to honor George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

THINGS TO DO AT HOME

1. Geometrical Shapes - Point out shapes in buildings, houses, etc. Every time you go for a walk or ride be on the lookout for different shapes. Some of the shapes that we have learned are:

- sphere
- cylinder
- cube
- diamond
- square
- prism
- rectangle
- circle
- triangle
- oval

2. Have the children explain to you just what they did on their thinking worksheets and Math worksheets when they bring them home.

3. New T.V. Show - What Do You Do? Wednesday, 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. on Channel 3.

4. Take your child to the library. If they can print both names, they can have a Library card. The nearest Library is at 40th and Logan Streets.

5. Take him to the Academy of Natural Sciences on Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. from September to April for free Nature films. Use the 107th Street entrance for free admission. The films are of interest to both children and adults. For a detailed listing of dates and titles, call XO9-7200, ext. 22 or write to the Special Programs Department, The Academy of Natural Sciences of Metropolis, 107th and Summit Drive, Metropolis, CW 00010.

6. Try to find time over the weekend to read to your child the book that he brings home from my library. He has chosen the book because he likes it and he looks forward to spending this time with you.

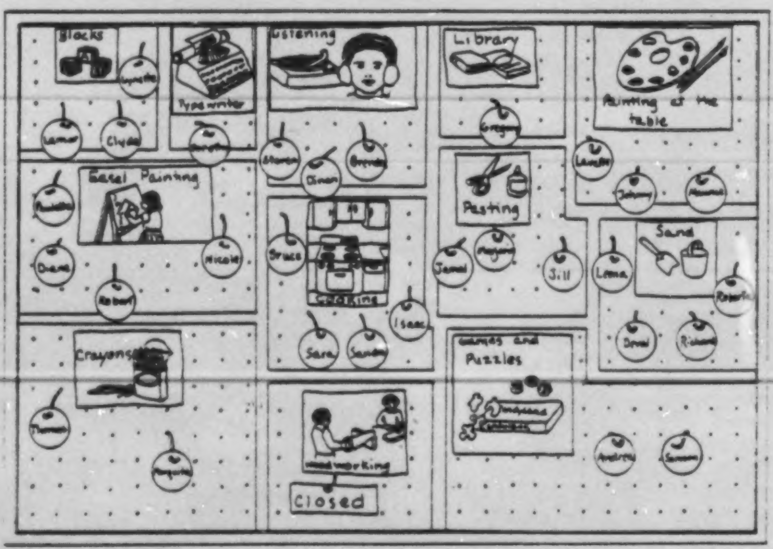
Thank you for your cooperation.

Mrs. Mercer tells parents at her initial meeting with them that she wants them to concentrate on helping the school develop in their children listening skills and a sense of responsibility while they are in kindergarten. A persistent theme at Harriet Tubman is that "school is children's work," and that with a job comes responsibility. Children have the responsibility to come to school regularly, even if it is difficult to do so. They are expected to complete homework assignments and get their parent's signature, and to bring in a note if they have been absent.

Teachers at Harriet Tubman foster independence and responsibility in their students early in their school careers. Mrs. Mercer explained how a child, whose mother was an alcoholic, made sure on his own that he was properly dressed for assembly each week. He made sure he had a clean shirt with a collar to wear on Wednesday, assembly day. If his mother wanted him to wear his last clean shirt with a collar on Tuesday, he would maneuver to wear something else. He knew that if he wore a shirt with a collar that the school would supply him with a tie; so every Wednesday he appeared in a clean shirt with a collar and his kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Mercer, helped him put on the tie she always had for him. He knew what his responsibility was. A typical remark of Mrs. Mercer's is: "If Mother doesn't remember to put on your boots, you put them on. They're your feet and your boots. That's your responsibility."

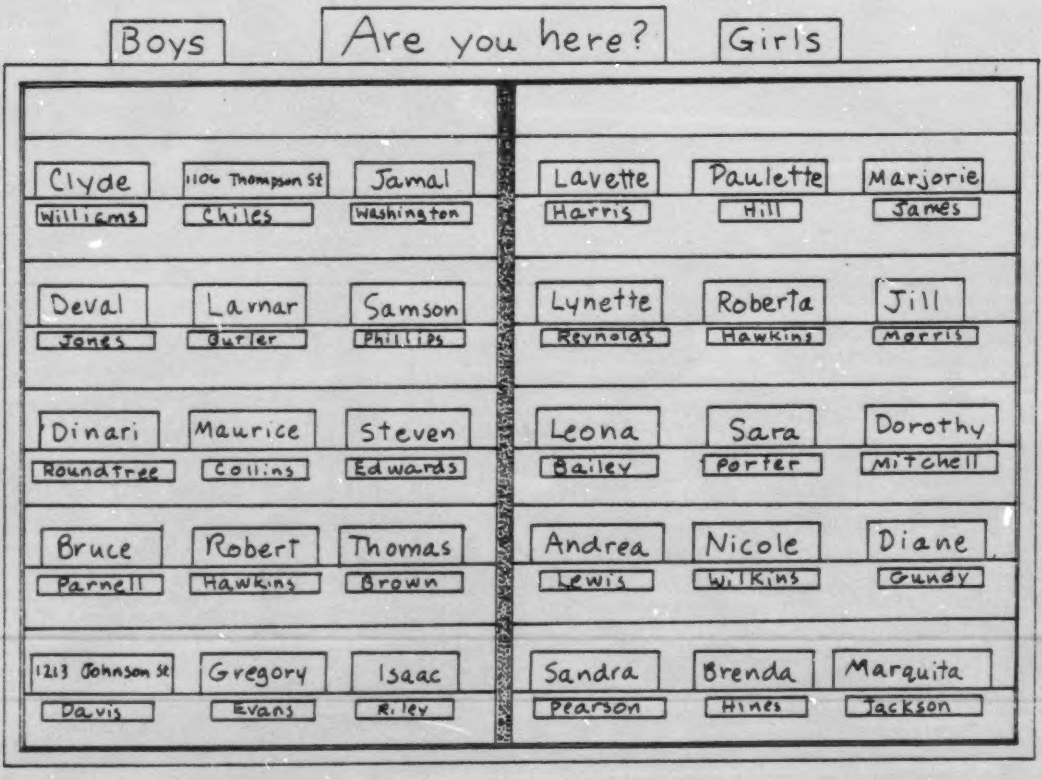
At Harriet Tubman, kindergarten children are assisted in developing a sense of responsibility in many ways:

The Choice Board. Everyday each child in Mrs. Mercer's classroom chooses one of his or her activities from those which are "open" on the Choice Board. This selection reinforces the need to take responsibility for their lives, as well as helps the children develop reading skills.


Blocks
Typewriter
Listening
Library
Painting at the table
Easel Painting
Pasting
Sand
Cooking
Crayons
Games and Puzzles
Woodworking
Closed
Lamar
Clyde
Gregory
Brenda
Diane
Nicole
Robert
Bruce
Sara
Isaac
Jill
Johnny
David

The children do the activity of their choice after participating in the basic skills lessons (reading, handwriting, math) designated for their particular group.

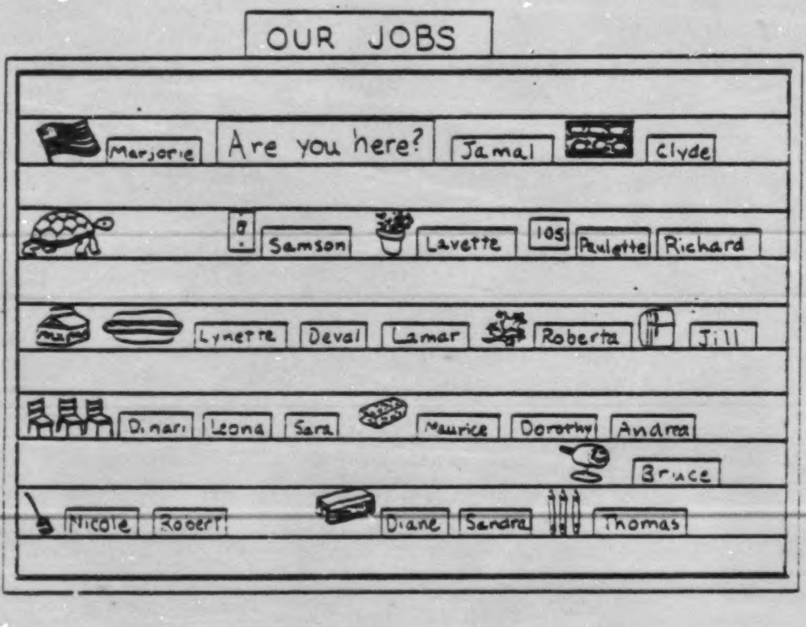
The "Are you here?" Chart. Upon their arrival at school, the children are to turn over the card located above their last names on the "Are you here?" chart. When the children arrive in the morning, this card is turned to the side which shows the child's address. Thus the act of locating the card and then turning it over entails being able to recognize ones address and last name. When the card is turned over, it shows the child's first name. Before leaving for home at the end of the day, each child turns this card over to the side which shows his or her address.


Boys
Are you here?
Girls
Clyde
Williams
1106 Thompson St
Chiles
Jamal
Washington
Deval
Jones
Lamar
Butler
Samson
Phillips
Dinari
Roundtree
Maurice
Collins
Steven
Edwards
Bruce
Parnell
Robert
Hawkins
Thomas
Brown
1213 Johnson St
Davis
Gregory
Evans
Isaac
Riley
Lavette
Harris
Paulette
Hill
Marjorie
James
Lynette
Reynolds
Roberta
Hawkins
Jill
Morris
Leona
Bailey
Sara
Porter
Dorothy
Mitchell
Andrea
Lewis
Nicole
Wilkins
Diane
Gundy
Sandra
Pearson
Brenda
Hines
Marquita
Jackson

The necessity of carrying out their responsibilities and following the established routine of turning over their cards on the "Are you here?" Chart is reinforced daily by Mrs. Mercer. She makes her students **believe** that she takes attendance based on the status of the "Are you here?" Chart. As far as the children know, they will be marked absent if they do not fulfill their responsibilities by turning over the appropriate card on the Chart.

The "Are you here?" Chart also reinforces the necessity for the children to learn to read their names, and recognize their addresses. Turning over their name and address cards on the "Are you here?" Chart helps the children learn to recognize their names and addresses almost immediately because they need to be able to do this. In addition, the children's names were printed on strips attached to their desks, as well as on place mats which are put on the children's desks at lunchtime. The children whose job it is to distribute the place mats have to place each mat in its proper place while children are away from their desks completing their group work. Since the children are away from their desks while the place mats are being distributed, the mat helpers have to be able to either read the name on the mat or at least match the name on the mat to the printed name on each desk in order to do their jobs.

Jobs Chart. Each week every child in Mrs. Mercer's class is given an assigned job to carry out. These jobs are listed on the Jobs Chart. Every child has a different job to do each week and each child eventually gets to do every job several times. The children look at the Jobs Chart each Monday to read where their names are listed and after patient daily reinforcement of the need to fulfill this responsibility, they eventually complete their tasks in a smooth, routine fashion.



Additional Glimpses of the School

Since the days of Miss Chapin, parents have traditionally received their children's report cards at the end of each marking period during a fifteen-minute parent-teacher conference scheduled by the school. These conferences, under the leadership of Howard Best, run like clockwork --- as they did in Miss Chapin's day --- and, on the average, 95 percent of the parents attend. The week before the conferences are to be held, letters are sent home suggesting a time for the personal fifteen-minute conference. If this time is not convenient, parents may call the school to arrange another time that is convenient for them. The Friday before the conference week, notes are again sent home reminding parents of the conference time. The Monday of the conference week, notes are sent home reminding parents that their children will be dismissed after lunch on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. In order to assure that all teachers are free by one o'clock, the lunch schedule is revised. Each day of the conference week, Mr. Best gets on the public address system and announces the altered lunch schedule to the school.

Each parent receives his or her child's report card during this conference and has the opportunity to discuss it with the teacher. The teacher can take advantage of this time to share each individual child's strengths and weaknesses and to tell how the parent can help. Many teachers also use this time to enlist volunteers to assist in the classroom. Parents also have the opportunity during this conference time to talk with those teachers who meet with their children once a week to teach them art, music, science, mathematics, and language arts.

Consistency is a prevalent theme at the Harriet Tubman School, a theme that is apparent in the individual classrooms as well as the school in general. The following description of what occurred the day the annual Christmas assembly was to be held illustrates what was typical in the school.

The Christmas Assembly

Heavy snow and ice in the morning caused many people living in Metropolis and the outlying suburbs to take from two to three hours to get to work. It took two hours for me to go from my apartment to Harriet Tubman, a distance of less than three miles. As my car inched along in heavy traffic, I figured the Christmas Assembly at Tubman would begin a little later than expected---or, most likely, be postponed until tomorrow. That's what I was hoping. Because it was after nine already and I had promised to deliver film and flashcubes to Mrs. Wingate---one of the teachers whose class was performing in the intermediate grades' Christmas Assembly at ten o'clock. I had left my apartment at 8 o'clock;

it had taken an hour to get to a place that was only four blocks away.

I got out of my car, leaving it in the spot where it had been glued for the past fifteen minutes and joined the throngs of people waiting to use the public telephones behind Gino's. The wait in the frigid ice and snow surrounded by so many people calling in to say they'd be late made me more sure than ever that the Christmas Assembly would either be postponed or begin late.

I was wrong. When I finally got the school secretary, Mrs. Haines, on the telephone, she told me that not only had the assembly not been postponed, the primary grades' assembly had been in progress for some time. By then, it was 9:30. I continued on to Harriet Tubman, flabbergasted that in spite of the chaos the weather had caused the assembly had not been postponed; it had begun on time.

I finally arrived half-an-hour later and the primary assembly was still in progress; they were "running late." Later, I found that Mrs. Randolph, a third grade teacher who lived in another state and was in the midst of a pregnancy, was the only teacher in the entire school who was absent.

Mrs. Gray helped Mrs. Coombs with her class and Randolph's, who were to perform together. Mrs. Coombs' class was a little restless, due to the weather conditions, having to perform, etc., and Mrs. Coombs was irritated with them. Mrs. Gray told her to relax, "Children will do this," when the children forgot a cue or appeared distracted. Then Mrs. Gray's class performed and she stood in front, saying the words with them. When the presentations were over, Mr. Best came forward to compliment the classes on their work and to thank parents for attending. "We could not do this without your support," he told them, as he tells them virtually every time he addresses them.

I went upstairs to deliver the film and flashcubes and found that Mrs. Wingate had just arrived. She was bustling about, trying to get her students' costumes on, etc. She said she'd been stuck in traffic on Seminole drive for three hours. I was relieved to find the traffic jams and ice weren't figments of my imagination.

Every student in the Harriet Tubman graduating class contributed a personal message to the yearbook. Near the back of the book under the title "The Graduates," were listed the names of the eleven schools the graduates would be attending, what they wanted to be (artist, clerk, teacher, fireman, principal, singer, doctor, mechanic, pilot, actor, skater, lawyer, policeman, dancer, farmer) and the names of their teachers and administrators. Then, under the words "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now!" were listed the first names of every student in the graduating class. This was followed by the graduating classes' "Last Will and Testament."

The yearbook was developed, with the help of the students, by the school's Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Golden. The cover was off-set printed (thanks to the funding of the Home School Association) and designed by a teacher who is also an artist. The yearbook theme was "Knowledge is Power" and this was written within a circle in the middle of the yearbook's cover along with the name of the school and class of 1980, and the words:

> Believe in yourself
> and you can really make it
> if you try.
> Believe in yourself
> with self-respect,
> and self-reliance as
> your guide,
> Believe in yourself.

Graduation is the ultimate goal within the Harriet Tubman School, but throughout their matriculation at the school, achievement and progress are rewarded daily in classrooms, on report cards, and in awards assemblies held for both primary- and intermediate-grade students in the spring of each year. Programs are professionally printed up with funds from Home and School for these awards assemblies, as well as for graduation. Many teachers have their own awards-presentation assemblies within their classrooms, enabling them to give official recognition for achievement or progress in more areas than time allows in the larger school-wide assemblies.

Graduation

At graduation, the theme, appropriate to the Harriet Tubman philosophy, was "Believe in Yourself." Preparations were elaborate: Home and School financed professionally-printed programs for the occasion and students rehearsed a full week before the event. The graduating class of eighth graders, their family, friends, and teachers were invited to attend. The auditorium, beautifully decorated by Home and School, was jam-packed, and numerous teachers of the other classes in the school maneuvered to get away from their rooms to peer through the crowded doorways of the auditorium for a look at the handsome graduates in their suits and dresses.

On the stage at the front of the auditorium sat the three people who would speak to the audience: Mr. Best, the president of the student council, and the keynote speaker, Dr. Walden, a professor from the school where Mr. Best is attaining a doctorate. The theme of all the brief speeches reinforced the Believe-in-Yourself theme: the speakers told of people, Black and White, who were able to succeed against seemingly overwhelming hardships. Walden spoke, and then the class valedictorian, who built up a rhythmic cadence, saying, "believe in yourself, know you can do it if you try." The graduates sang "America the Beautiful," then the student valedictorian introduced Mr. Best.

"I am very proud to introduce a man who comes from this neighborhood. He went to Harriet Tubman, then went to school long enough to become a principal. We were fortunate that he chose to come back to Harriet Tubman. Even now he is improving himself by continuing school. Soon he will be Dr. Best. I am very proud to introduce our principal, Mr. Best!" The people in the audience applauded loudly and emotionally at the end of this introduction. Some stood up and said, "Yes!"

Mr. Best smiled broadly and thanked everyone for coming. He told the many parents attending that the children could not have gotten to this point without their help. He admonished them, as he always does, to take good care of their children and then proceeded to present the awards for student achievement. The first was named after Miss Chapin, and was given for student achievement. Others included an award contributed by Home and School, and one given by Omega Psi Phi, a national Black fraternity.

Mr. Best congratulated the sixth grade teachers and students for working so hard to boost achievement, and for putting on such a good graduation. He lavished even more praise on the teacher who took charge of the preparations for graduation. As praise was given, he asked each person receiving it to stand and receive a thunderous applause.

Mr. Best joked about how hard it was to get some of the boys and girls to behave properly, as well as come dressed as nicely as they were today. "Some of the boys and girls still aren't speaking to me," he laughed.

He then went into the history of excellence at Harriet Tubman (as he often does) and anecdotes about Miss Chapin. He told how she believed in excellence and that every student could achieve, and that she always gave a book for a gift or an award. He asked how many in the audience had attended Harriet Tubman; and about a quarter of them raised their hands.

He then introduced Miss Barrett, a retired teacher who had earned a reputation for excellent teaching long before any of the older teachers who presently taught at Harriet Tubman had. In fact, Mrs. Gray had spoken of Miss Barrett as a legend, and my father in his numerous fond reminiscences about Harriet Tubman and the "fabulous" teachers there, often singled her out as the best teacher he had ever had. At Mr. Best's insistence, Miss Barrett, who used to be Mr. Best's fourth grade teacher, went up to the stage to speak to the audience. She told us some more about Miss Chapin--what a gracious and loving woman she was and how Mr. Best had been Miss Chapin's"favorite."

The school counselor then came forward to call the names of the high schools the graduates would be attending and to have the students stand when their name and future school was called. The audience applauded loudly when each group of students and the school they would be attending was called. They would be going to eleven different high schools across the city, many of which had highly competitive entrance *requirements. A very big deal was made of all of this: letting the graduates know that they had succeeded in achieving an important milestone, and that they should "believe in themselves" and their abilities to achieve excellence. Then the class sang "Lift Every Voice," the Black National Anthem.*

"Remember, this is a school for children; they are our greatest concern," said Mr. Best as he returned to the stage. "Parents, without your help, they would not have made it. The key is working together." He then went on to give the charge to the graduates; he told them that if they were graduating from senior high school, they would be turning over their tassels at this moment.

Mr. Best had the Severely Physically Impaired (SPI) graduates wheeled forward first to be congratulated and receive their applause. Harriet Tubman is the only school in District 13 to have three full SPI classes. This was a highly emotional moment and many in the auditorium had tears in their eyes. After the SPI graduates left, Mr. Best told us that these students had now completed their educational careers, since the government provides no further education for them.

He charged the parents to help their children realize how fortunate they are, and to believe in themselves. "Without your help," he told them again, "they could never have made it.... Remember, this is a school for children; they are our first concern!"

"Now, I put you against any kids in this city," Mr. Best said, turning to the graduates, whose faces reflected the significance of this event in their lives--living in a society wherein a majority of people like themselves drop out of high school.

"You have now earned the right to go out the front door of this school," Mr. Best told the graduates, who were beaming broadly now, "because that is the door you will come back in." The pianist played "Pomp and Circumstance" while the graduates filed out through the front door of the school in well-rehearsed fashion.

* * * *

One is in danger of magnifying the uniqueness of any situation when describing it in depth. There is a danger of the reader's believing, after reading this in-depth account, that the success experienced at Harriet Tubman was due to circumstances unique to it, factors that could not be duplicated. In fact, most of the factors that appear to account for the success of the school are not unique to it at all, but factors that were common in the vast majority of the successful schools described in the review of the literature in chapter two: (1) strong leadership, (2) high expectations, (3) strong emphasis on reading and writing, (4) strong emphasis on phonics and the teaching of spelling patterns, (5) careful evaluation of progress, and (6) parental involvement.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INTERLOCKING PROFILES

The observer undertook the following interlocking profiles to trace interactions among individuals whose lives touch because of some relation to the school and/or community. It is hoped that the profiles or "networks" of interaction illuminate features of the school-community-home experience that might go unremarked otherwise. The profiles are not intended to provide comprehensive information about the individuals in their relation to any aspect of their lives or to one another. Rather, they represent the observer's experience of the individuals in the contexts noted over a period of several months. The pattern of the observations was initial concentration on the subject, lasting from a few days to no more than a week's time, followed by periodic re-establishment of contact over the period of months. As a result, contact was both planned and incidental.

Mrs. Porter, Sara, and Mrs. Mercer. Mrs. Porter is a divorced woman in her early thirties. She has been living in the government housing project for a year and is a welfare recipient. She has several children who do not live with her and two who do. She resides in a two-bedroom apartment on an upper floor in one of the high-rises, considered by residents to be the least desirable of the housing units, competing unfavorably with the single-unit, row house dwellings that surround the taller buildings. She states, as do other parents I interviewed in the high-rise, that she has put in an application to be transferred to a house (one of the low-rise units) but that no action has been taken. She complains, as do other parents, that it seems one needs "connections" in order to be transferred.

The apartment itself is sparsely furnished. The general impression is one of lack of material comforts, although there is a stereo set and a television as well as a set of encyclopdia, in this instance, Encyclopedia Brittanica. There are also magazines: Good Housekeeping, Sports Illustrated, Newsweek, and Psychology Today. Mrs. Porter apologies for her housekeeping. Over the telephone when we are setting up times for visits and when I enter the apartment, she mentions the housekeeping—that she is having difficulty getting to it, that she is going to spend all day the next day on it, and the like. The laundry is often mentioned in the same way. She seems burdened in the early visits by necessities that she wants to deal with and just doesn't seem to get to; the impression becomes noteworthy in light of later developments.

She is burdened also by the fact that she has enrolled in two courses at the local extension of the community college--courses in accounting and in Spanish--and has not attended for several sessions; she wonders if she will be able to catch up. Mrs. Porter is talkative and appears open but distracted. She wants to become involved politically in the neighborhood and mentions that in the recent election, she had to go to some lengths to find out how to place her ballot when the voting machine broke down in her district. She knows the names of the local party officials and representatives. She has already hosted a meeting of parents of Harriet Tubman--parents who reside in the high rise--and is disappointed that the school representative did not take steps to encourage further meetings.

Mrs. Porter works part-time as a parent-scholar in one of the classrooms at Harriet Tubman. She states that she enjoys learning and re-learning with the children. She wants her children to get a good education and believes she will find a way to make that wish a reality. The words and the mannerisms project vitality of mind and spirit. Mrs. Porter seems to be a doer, even possibly an activist. There is for the observer an impression of dissonance in experiencing the woman against the background of the room, with its "functional" starkness--its cinder-block walls and drab paint and dark tile floors. Mrs. Porter's smile is bright but distant. She does not, for all her talkativeness and apparent confidences, appear to be an easy person to get to know.

Sara, the kindergartener, is an energetic child at home. Also, she likes doing her homework and never has to be forced to do it. In particular, she likes "writing"--printing letters of the alphabet. On one occasion, after having read a storybook aloud to me--a performance that was half word-recognition and half memorization--she painstakingly copies the information on the book's cover, then picks up an empty raisins box from the table and copies everything on the box. It is evident that she likes the "performance" aspects of copying, and then presenting the product for comments. In my first experience of Sara, she is seated on the floor in front of the television, which she is ignoring for the moment, and is printing letters randomly remembered from her school work. Typically, Sara's range of activity in any afternoon can be broad, considering the confinement of the apartment. She may choose to read one moment, skate across the tile floor the next--on real skates--and then use the back of a stuffed reclining chair as a sliding board. Or again, she may turn on the record player and dance, mimicking the steps popular among older children.

Sara's reading and writing activities at present are closely related to her need to be noticed and praised. She wants me to put a star on her paper to indicate I have liked what she has written and insists that the star cover the face of the paper, to the extent of being what I feel is a defacement of the work. Mrs. Porter says that her daughter often asks after doing her homework, "Do you think Mrs. Mercer will like it? Do you think she'll be pleased?"

The performance aspect of Sara's reading and writing skills is encouraged by her mother. In a casual taping session with Sara and neighbor-children, in which the children are being "interviewed" by me and otherwise saying whatever they want, Mrs. Porter says, "Sara, go get your book and read it into the machine." Sara brings in the same book, half-memorized, that she has read aloud for me on a previous occasion. Another child, who is telling a story at the time is interrupted. Sara reads, while the other children, as well as the three adults in the room, listen. Whenever the other children try to interject comments about the book or anything else, they are quieted by the adults although the reading takes as long as ten minutes. Then, Sara wants everybody to be quiet again while the tape plays back the full reading. At one point she covers her ears with her hands and tries to shut everybody else out. A neighbor-child (in whose parents' apartment the taping has occurred) Sara's age picks up the book and begins "reading" the pictures. Sara angrily tries to take the book away, saying several times, "She can't even read." Mrs. Porter asks that they not tear the book, then asks the neighbor-child, "Don't you have a book like this?" to which the response is a shake of the head. The book is one Mrs. Porter has gotten through a free service at the school.

Later, Sara performs an impromptu dance to a popular tune while the adults and other children watch. Mrs. Porter laughs appreciatively.

Sara is encouraged to talk. She often interrupts the conversations of adults to tell about something on T.V. or ask a question or make a comment, sometimes prefacing her request or statement with the words, "Excuse me." Mrs. Porter listens with apparent interest until the matter is expressed and then responds in some way, either through smiling or laughter, if appropriate, or a comment. If the interruption becomes frequent, she will say, "Now go look at T.V. or read your book while I talk to _____."

At home, Sara will pick up adult reading materials, an encyclopedia volume or an advertisement or one of her brother's sports magazines and try to read them, fastening on words here and there she recognizes.

I learn first from Mrs. Porter that Sara is "bright." She says of her daughter: "Sara knows I expect her to bring home good grades." On one occasion, when I say that I wish I could see Sara five or six years hence, Mrs. Porter says, "It really would be interesting to follow one child a number of years--one gifted child." Then she mentions, as example, an article in Psychology Today about the Terman study of gifted children. Mrs. Porter also states that pediatricians and psychiatrists who write about children often use their own children as subjects. Whatever the reason for the comments, it is clear that she considers her own daughter gifted and has interpreted my comment in that light, although I was expressing interest in a more generalized fashion in the shaping of Sara as a person.

Sara did not have regular bedtime hours. She would at times stay up late playing music—according to her mother, brother and friends—if the adults were also up; and on two occasions when I picked her up for school, she was obviously still in need of sleep. Because of lateness, on those days she went to school without breakfast or with a limited breakfast—i.e., a piece of fruit.

At home, Sara was not timid in the company of adults—her mother or others. She might ask "Why?" when told by her mother to do something she didn't want to do. In the neighbor's apartment, she went into a back room and came out, to the neighbor's dismay, with a towel from the fresh laundry wrapped around her body. On my second visit, she said to me, "You came here to see how we live."

The Sara I encountered in her home was aggressive, talkative, confident, and a bit flamboyant.

I was, therefore, unprepared for the teacher's and assistant's comments that Sara's problem was that she was "babyish" and "immature." Certainly I had seen prankishness, but the descriptions didn't sound like the child who had insisted one afternoon on leading me several blocks through the neighborhood to find her mother who, Sara was convinced, was at the laundromat.

The following notes illustrate what was typically Sara's experience in class:

> The assistant teacher asks Sara to bring her workbook to the table to be checked. That done, Sara is told to put the book away. Sara takes the wrong "route" to the storage shelf, and Mrs. Mercer (the teacher) calls her back, tells another child to show her the right route to take. Mrs. Mercer says, "After seven months of kindergarten--" and shakes her head. "You may be Mommy's baby, but you're not my baby. Take your finger out of your mouth."
>
> At circle time, the children are volunteering to give the full name of one other child in the classroom. Sara volunteers and stands up but doesn't give the full name. Mrs. Mercer has to ask her several times to "speak up."
>
> Sara is called upon to read, and she begins reading in the wrong place. Joyce, the child seated next to her, tries to help, but Mrs. Mercer says, "Don't show her. She should be paying attention." Joyce draws her hand away. Another child is called upon; then Mrs. Mercer calls on Sara again. Sara still hasn't found the right place on the page. Joyce tries again to help and is caught the second time. Joyce tries once more, but Sara doesn't get it right. Finally, Joyce has to indicate the right place with Mrs. Mercer's permission. The reading done, children are asked to open their homework books. Sara begins turning pages at the front of her book. Mrs. Mercer says, "Sara, that's the silly way to do it; we're at the back of the book." Joyce tries to show Sara where

> to turn. Sara still can't find the right page. Joyce shakes her head solicitously and smiles. She shows Sara again. When called upon, Sara does not know the answer.
>
> Sara is attentive during library story hour but not overtly responsive; she does not laugh or smile. Back in class, she is last to open her workbook and write her name on the page. She yawns frequently. When she finishes the page, she waits rather than going on to the next page--seems to be waiting for instructions, although instructions have been given. She gets up to go blow her nose and returns to the wrong seat. Boy says angrily, "That's my seat." She gets up and goes to her seat, says softly, "I'm sorry," and yawns.
>
> She waits in line to have her workbook checked; she has not torn the pages out of her workbook, as Mrs. Mercer has instructed. When it's her turn, Sara is told to go back and tear the pages out. She does not approach the creasing-and-tearing process correctly (Mrs. Mercer has previously told the children how to go about it), and therefore cannot tear the pages out. Frustrated, she puts thumb in her mouth and holds her ear. Suddenly she yanks the pages hard, and they come out. She receives three dots for her work. Mrs. Mercer says, "This is good, but you should have gotten four dots (the maximum)."

Mrs. Mercer says that Sara doesn't pay attention, that Sara wants to do just what she wants to do. She says that it will be a "liability if Sara gets a teacher (in first grade) who treats her as if she's cute. She is cute, but I would never let her know."

The accounts given above might suggest that Sara does below-average work. However, the opposite is the case. The children in Mrs. Mercer's class are grouped homogeneously, according to the level of work done in class, considered in conjunction with standardized test scores, and Sara is in the top-performance group. In spite of the fact that Sara was often late to class or absent (19 times in one semester), she scored consistently in the top five percent of the class on exams--teacher-made as well as standardized. "She's so bright," Mrs. Mercer says, "it's a shame she's late and absent so much."

In general, Sara's behavior in class is subdued, carefully polite, and at times distracted. She watches what other children are doing. On one occasion, when Sara had made "100" on a teacher-made exam in spite of having been absent three days in the previous week, the teacher said, "Sara is all right as long as she is working by herself. If other children are present, she is so busy looking at them, she can't do her own work."

I did observe Sara trying to shut other children out. On one occasion, she was annoyed with other children at the table who were counting aloud during a math exercise. She said repeatedly, "Don't count out loud," frowned angrily and wouldn't work. Finally, she asked the assistant for dividers (two pieces of cardboard fashioned to stand on-end to form a makeshift study carrel). The assistant moved her to an individual seat. On another occasion, she was late getting started with her reading exercise because she had spent excessive time adjusting her "carrel" so that she would have as much privacy as possible. As in the example above, she might start out at the table with other children and then have to be moved to an individual seat, for reasons that were work-related and not disciplinary.

At odd moments, I glimpsed the personality I had seen at home. Sara sometimes "danced" at her seat while she was waiting for her work to be checked or at other moments in-between activities. The dancing consisted mainly of movements from the waist up--swaying and finger-popping motions. At times she would skip to the bathroom and back.

It was apparent to me that Sara's babyishness and ineptness were often just sleepiness, a possibility that the teacher was sensitive to, although she had no way of appreciating to what extent the likelihood existed. On one occasion, Mrs. Mercer shook her finger, not unkindly, at Sara. "You need to go to bed early, so you won't be tired in the morning."

Mrs. Mercer says to Sara, "I wish Mother would spend a day in the classroom; then Mother would know what I mean." At the moment, Sara is attempting to find the proper shelf on which to place her finished work, a task Mrs. Mercer feels could have been simply accomplished if Sara had been "paying attention."

Sara's mother says, in speaking about the classroom, "I can't bear to stand there and watch. Mrs. Mercer gives Sara such a hard time. It's all I can do to keep from interfering." The comment is not made in relation to any prompting on my part, and significantly, Mrs. Porter is smiling as she speaks. She has deferred to Mrs. Mercer's judgment in the matter, and she speaks again of how "hard Sara tries" to please the teacher.

Mrs. Mercer admits readily that she wears a stern, unsmiling face much of the time. The reason, she says, is that she doesn't want the children to feel they can "get away" with behavior that disrupts classroom proceedings, and she wants to keep their minds focused in seriousness. Mrs. Mercer believes that the purpose of kindergarten is to prepare children academically for first grade; the purpose is not "play."

In her orientation for parents of children who are entering her kindergarten class, Mrs. Mercer stresses that she emphasizes language and comprehension in her teaching--and she defines comprehension for the parents as "thinking." On two days of the week, for one hour each day, Mrs. Mercer's kindergarteners have arts and crafts. The heart of each day of the week, however, barring trip days, is devoted to reading, writing and arithmetic in some form.

The classroom is ordered in such a way that all the materials children use--workbooks, cut-out letters, games, etc.--have a storage place which children must learn to honor. For example, in the mornings children take turns in "writing" on the flannel board, using letters that are kept in alphabetical stacks in a box. The letters must be returned to the stacks in such a way that every letter fits exactly over its counterparts, so that the letters will be immediately recognizable. In that way, children receive visual reinforcement of alphabetical sequence each time they open the box. Regardless as to how long it takes a child to put the letters away so that every "a", for instance, fits perfectly over every other "a"--the stems all turned in the same direction--Mrs. Mercer will insist that the job not be abandoned until it is completed correctly, even if the other children have begun another activity. In the same vein, the children are taught to use certain "routes" through the classroom to get from one point to the other--trash can, bathroom, etc.--and they will be stopped and made to return to the original point to start all over again when the proper route has been ignored. The routes have all been pre-determined by Mrs. Mercer for obtaining maximum efficiency of movement of children about the classroom, so that they are least likely to interfere with the activities of others.

These examples are pointed out to illustrate the tone of the classroom. The same concern for exactness and order and for efficiency of use of time is evidenced in every activity of the day--whether children are removing their coats in the morning or preparing for lunch or engaging in an academic exercise. A lesson that occurred one morning following a trip the students had taken earlier in the week to the zoo, illustrates the latter:

Before the class started, Mrs. Mercer had placed the names of zoo animals at the back of the classroom, on the wall. She did not call attention to those words while the children were engaged in playing seat games (puzzles, constructions, and the like), always the first activity of the day; but at circle time, she asked the children to tell her, without looking around, what was new at the back of the classroom. Then, again without looking back at the wall, children were asked to identify from memory animals they had seen at the zoo; the child who raised his or her hand to answer could not name an animal another child had already named. If a child said, "lion," then he or she had to go to the back of the classroom, study the word, then return and spell it correctly on a large pad set up in front of the circle so that everyone could see. If the child misspelled the word, he or she had to return to the wall, study it again, and re-attempt the spelling. Of course, "elephant" and "monkey" presented greater problems than "lion" and "tiger." And children who were not swift in raising their hands were left to remember animals least easily recalled. The rules were followed to the letter, however, although several children had to return again and again to the wall while the exercise was continuing with the other children. Such an activity, which, if pursued to the extent that every child had a turn, would potentially consume much of the day, might be cut short by scheduling (time for lunch, time for group work, etc.) although children who had begun the process--i.e., named an animal no one else had named and then gone to the wall to study the spelling--had to complete the assignment either then or at some stated time before the day was over (as "before lunch").

Mrs. Mercer readily points out, whether to child or to observer or parent, that she is teaching survival skills for "first grade"--interpreted generously to include all of her students' academic careers--as well as reading, writing and arithmetic. Those skills include the ability to follow directions and to concentrate on a task to its completion as well as the ability to be observant of and attentive to whatever the teacher presents. She says repeatedly to the children, "I don't know what you're going to do in first grade. In first grade, the teacher isn't going to tell you but once, and if you're not listening, you'll be in trouble."

The classroom is ordered so that children work in groups during the hour or more devoted to the heaviest concentration of basics development. The three groups, representing children's performance on tests (teacher-made and standardized) rotate--i.e., while group one is reading, group two is writing, and group three is doing math. At Mrs. Mercer's direction, the groups change places in the classroom. During the time of my observations, Mrs. Mercer always conducted the reading lessons, whereas classroom assistants conducted writing and math for the groups. Circle times are scheduled after group time and before lunch, an arrangement which allows children to leave their group work at staggered paces and to have some station immediately to go to; the strategy minimized the amount of time children spend that is undefined for them.

A product of a Black, middle-class background, Mrs. Mercer attended predominantly White public schools as a child (her parents sent her across school boundaries, having argued successfully that if a White child of their neighborhood could do so, then their child was eligible), then matriculated at the state university. She was an achiever in school, and her parents had expectations of her teaching in some school, White or integrated, far removed from the type of school that Harriet Tubman--which serves the children of low-income Black families--is. Mrs. Mercer taught in a suburban school her first years out of college, then transferred into the city and to Harriet Tubman, which was one of two assignments, both in schools with Black populations, offered her. She selected Harriet Tubman because she knew someone who had attended there and had recommended it as the better choice.

Mrs. Mercer admits that she "fell in love" with the children she had been warned to avoid. She found them attractive and bright and eager to learn, as much so as children she had encountered in the suburban setting. She says she asked herself why the children in her classroom at Harriet Tubman shouldn't receive as good instruction as children of families more privileged economically. Then she committed herself to providing what she believed to be quality instruction for her pupils; quality instruction, as she understood it, meant academic challenge in reading, writing and arithmetic.

As a consequence, in her classroom, Mrs. Mercer disallows the kind of atmosphere that would make school "fun" for children--extension of the play life of the earlier years--carrying what she would consider to be minimal responsibilities and providing entertaining distractions through a curriculum stressing games, sand play, constructions, arts and crafts, and the like. She tells the parents and she tells the children and she tells whoever else is interested that her instructional style is chosen deliberately to keep the children focused upon the work at hand, which is to learn "as much as they can" of the basics while they're in kindergarten. "I can't do anything about what happens when they leave my classroom (graduate from kindergarten and encounter other teachers), but I can see to it that they've had a good foundation," says Mrs. Mercer.

Her teaching style is traditional. Children are discouraged from talking to one another or assisting one another in their work (unless requested to do so by the teacher). They are expected to sit up straight whether at their desks or at circle time. There is no "free play" as such scheduled for any time of day. However, children who have been particularly conscientious may be awarded special privileges--e.g., a "basketball game" played with cloth ball and net in the hallway. (In that particular practice, Mrs. Mercer may be said to be less strict than others at the school; the game, which she played along with the children, received some frowns from passing personnel because of the unaccustomed level of noise.)

Although Mrs. Mercer says, "I want them (the children) to think I'm mean," she does not present a consistently stern, forbidding mask. Often she will scold first, then soften her tone, as below:

Mrs. Mercer (harshly): "I didn't tell you to open your book, Sara." Then softly, as if to aid Sara in the task: "You should have your paper on top of your book." Then, "You're going to read to me first." She also uses affectionate terms at times to soften the command, as in the following example, which also demonstrates harshness followed by gentleness:

Mrs. Mercer: "You're holding us up, Sara." More softly: "Hurry up, Sweetie. Just write your name. You have to go back later and do the date. You should be finished. Everybody else is finished." Now and then as a reward for performance, she will also hug a child.

Sara's behavior might differ in a group conducted by one of the teacher-assistants. The following notes illustrate:

> The group work is writing, conducted by a mild-mannered teaching assistant. Children are copying letters. Sara is behind the others in page work because of absenteeism, but quickly catches up.
>
> Sara says, "I'm finished, I'm finished," then yawns hard. Yawns again. She looks up and sees a girl from the math group (middle group) standing near her chair and says, "What you doing over here?" While other children's work is being checked by the assistant, Sara "dances" at seat, stamping her feet in time, then gets up and wriggles her body. She looks over another child's shoulder, then sits and begins exploring pages further along in the book. Continues "dancing" in seat, gets up and says, "I'm finished," then says to the assistant, "Hurry up and do that" (checking work of other children). She examines books on a shelf but does not open one, stands and leans over the table, slides back into the chair (other children are all seated), gets up and dances again, catches observer looking at her and sits down, starts bouncing in her chair as soon as the observer looks away. She examines the books again, opens one briefly, then puts it back, picks up her workbook and says, "I'm after her." Assistant tells her to sit down and wait. She begins looking at pictures in her workbook, says, "Eagle. Eagle," then gets up, starts to sit down again, misses chair and falls. Gets up, whirls, dances, takes her book to the assistant as all the children rise to get in line to move to the next section for group work.

Sara would never say "Hurry up and do that" to Mrs. Mercer. The Sara who emerges in the foregoing notes is more nearly like the Sara I observed at home--playful, aggressive verbally, and unafraid of the adults at hand--than the Sara who appears in the previous notes.

Mrs. Porter says frankly that her attitude towards discipline is far more lax than that of Mrs. Mercer's and that projected by the school's administration. She smiles and shrugs, conveying by her manner that she has no fixed opinions in either direction. She says, "I watch them (school personnel), and I can go along with it as long as it (strictness of discipline) doesn't get out of hand." At the same time, her manner suggests that she isn't convinced that her own approach is the last word. She is well aware of the adjustment Sara must make from the home environment to that of school. Of Mrs. Mercer, she says, "She teaches the way she was taught, and I guess she figures that, since she learned, that (approach) must be the best way."

Mrs. Mercer has no sympathy for teachers who say, "How much can I do? Their mothers have them for twenty hours; I have them for only four hours." She says that the school hours are sufficient if the time is used wisely. At the same time, she does not minimize the impact of the home. In the orientation session with parents, she says, "Parents are the best teachers. If you read, your children will read. Let them see you read." She advises parents to make use of available aids such as the "Back to School" section of the city's black-oriented newspaper as well as sections of other city papers that provide tips on teaching and on activities that can be undertaken at home--e.g., puppetry. She asks parents to read to their children. She advises them with regards to homework ("Take ten minutes and read the directions, then ask if she/he understands....The homework has to be signed, but don't correct it"). She tells parents ways they can assist the child in practicing aspects of school work without correcting specific lessons.

In addition the parent-orientation provides safety information and an overview of the daily classroom schedule; provides information about trips; gives parents the routine for requesting conferences ("call the office and say you want one"); gives tips on helping children assume responsibility ("Don't put homework book and library book in the bag for the child"); provides information about library cards ("Children can get one as soon a they can print their names"); and the like. The orientation is held in the classroom--parents sit in chairs brought in for the occasion; Mrs. Mercer stands near her desk. The tone she assumes is teacherly but approachable.

Mrs. Mercer grew up in a neighborhood that was "over the top"--one that was economically and socially for Blacks advanced over other neighborhoods represented in the "bottom to top" continuum. She lives in an apartment near the neighborhood she grew up in and attends church on a street that marks a dividing line between the "top" and "over the top." Her personal lifestyle is a quiet one that revolves essentially around home, her children, a few friends, relatives--many of who are professionals--church and women's social and educational organizations.

Mrs. Porter's early life was spent in various residencies in several sections of the city, including some years spent in the neighborhood in which she now lives. She does not consider her present residence and circumstances to be permanent. She believes that much better is in store for her even though she does not know exactly what form the improvement will take or just how it will come about. Improvement has to do with getting out of the projects and getting more education and having a good job with salary enough that she doesn't have to worry so much about making ends meet. Improvement also has to do with personal associations--having neighbors and friends whose aspirations and activities will provide a "push" for herself. As she says it: "...a community...on the move, that would motivate you to go out and get a job and to upgrade your income so that you could realize some of the better things in life, you know, sort of like to build up your morale. This immediate community that I live in, I mean, you don't have to prove anything here."

Mrs. Porter does not show up for her job as a parent-scholar for a week. During that week Sara also is absent several days from school. Mrs. Porter tells me finally that she is having some emotional difficulties and mentions matters she just can't seem to get together, matters having to do with housekeeping, laundry, getting the children to school, and the like. She says she has not gotten back to her college classes and has had to drop them. She says that she has been staying in the house all day everyday and not caring to go outside. We discuss emotions, my own and hers, and how difficult it is sometimes to keep oneself going. I tell her about a psychiatrist I have visited, and I offer to make an appointment for her.

Mrs. Porter tells me that she prefers to go to a neighborhood health center. She also tells me that she has made an appointment to talk to a pastor in a church near the projects, a church located inside the triangle. She tells me that if those moves prove not to be helpful, she will see the psychiatrist I have recommended.

My home visits end shortly thereafter. Mrs. Porter goes to the health center and receives assistance that helps her begin functioning better. The children begin attending school more regularly. She makes a new friend and begins looking for a job. She also begins to become seriously involved with community politics.

Discussion

A number of issues are raised by the foregoing profiles. One has to do with the impact of the observer. To what extent was the behavior of the three individuals--mother, child and teacher--a response to the presence of an outsider? Certainly there were instances in which Mrs. Porter was impatient with Sara and raised her voice, occasionally in the presence of the observer. The general tone of Mrs. Porter's manner with Sara, however, was conciliatory. She appeared to some extent to be apologetic about her "laxness" (her own word) and said on one occasion that it was difficult to be "strict" in the projects; the apartments were small, the elevators were often broken, and there was no play area on the floors outside the apartments--all of which meant that children suffered a sense of confinement because of the physical environment. In addition, she equated strictness with the holding of one's children apart from other children, which she felt under the circumstances was unrealistic.

There is the issue of "performance" for the sake of the observer. Clearly, Mrs. Porter wanted to impress others with Sara's reading ability. The presense of the observer simply provided opportunity for occurrences that were already considered desirable by all concerned, including, in the example given of Sara's taped performance, Mrs. Porter's neighbors.

Mrs. Porter is an astute observer herself and was certainly aware that the outsider, given the nature of the observational focus, would make note of such a comment as that concerning the Terman study and the use of psychologists' children for purposes of study. The significant factors, however, are that she had read the article (she had a subscription to the magazine) and that the comment was appropriate to the moment and would probably not have been made otherwise. Mrs. Porter was not one to miss seizing upon such an opportunity for display of her own gifts; she was a performer herself in the sense of being able to appreciate what behavior would be most likely noticed as well as when and for what purpose, and then being able to rise to the occasion. When I mentioned, in the course of preparing this report, that I was ever aware of her complexity and that the profile of her was proving somewhat difficult, she responded by reading to me a letter that had been written some years earlier by an associate as a personal reference for school enrollment and pointed out to me that she felt the characterization was accurate. She was trying to be helpful and at the same time was "cueing" me. Mrs. Porter admitted that she had many "faces" and that she believed it was necessary in the urban environment to be able to "roll with the punches" and to have a "self" ready to cope with every occasion while maintaining personal reserve--in common terms to be able to "tell 'em everything and nothing." She projected more self-assurance in telling me about the latest happening in the state capitol affecting the economic well-being of local residents, than in talking about the everyday demands of domesticity. Her comments and speculations regarding community matters always proved to be provocative.

The possibility of modification because of the observer of Mrs. Mercer's response to the children in affectionate displays is worthy of comment. Were the instances of harshness of reprimand followed by softness affected by the observer's presence? Mrs. Mercer's stated preference of approach was one of sternness. She was more consistent with her official "mask" in the first days of observations than the latter. She had periods of being more or less stern. There is more reason to believe that the harsh-soft behavior was an expression showing through of the conflict in official and unofficial self than that she was responding to the observer's presence. When Mrs. Mercer first said to me that she was most pleased with the children's performance over-all, I was surprised. In observing, I had imagined she would be privately as critical of the level of the children's response as she was openly with them. Her "I would never let them know" posture was designed to keep the children striving always to perform better. Also implied, of course, was that they hadn't yet pleased the teacher--that for the reward of stars or dots or "C" sprawled across the face of the page or at times a hug or a lollipop, they had to do better work (Note Sara's "Do you think Mrs. Mercer will like it?" as well as her insistence that I cover the page at home with a star, as I later observed Mrs. Mercer to do in the classroom).

The relation of performance to authority (type and quality of performance in response to the form authority takes) is one that will be referred to in other contexts within this report. It is noteworthy that Sara, in her performance and behavior, distinguished between the central authority figure in the classroom and intermediate adult figures. I had far less impression that, during group-work conducted by assistants, she was performing immediately for approval of the assistants. In one instance, in math group, she sat and "played" with the counters, lining them up in various ways and stacking them, instead of carrying out the task at hand--a behavior I could not imagine of her in close range of Mrs. Mercer. And the particular assistant was one who, unlike the milder-mannered assistant reported in the profile (page 120), employed intimidation in voice and manner--berating the children constantly and loudly--in order to force them to remain attentive to their work.

A recurrent theme within the school is that of "work" as opposed to "play." Mrs. Mercer distinguished between "brain work" and "play." In the first activity of the day, for approximately thirty minutes, children were allowed to select games for seat play. Games included puzzles, lotto, peg boards, parquetry, number games, and the like. These activities allowed individual choice to children, but represented "brain work" activity as opposed to, for instance, play with large blocks or with dolls or sand, which represented for Mrs. Mercer "play." Pasting and painting were also considered "play." The child who approached the block corner or play room would be quickly reminded that "play" was afternoon activity and that he/she should choose a game that required thinking.

The following are teacher comments made during the first activity period:

-- If you can't play without teacher, I'll have to put that game away. (A few children were playing a group game and having disagreements.)

-- Put that [group] game away, because Doris isn't playing it correctly.

-- No coloring; get something to make your brains work: spelling or number line games.

-- That's too easy; get something that will make your brain work.

Note that "play" was used, in the first comment above, to mean "play- or game-work" (solitary or group brain-work through individual choice). It was also used generally to mean activity that did not involve "thinking" as opposed to activity that required thinking ("work" or "brain work"). Certain activities might fit either category, depending on the circumstance. Coloring, as in the third comment above, might be permissable to a child in the lowest group during free-choice "brain work" period but not to a child in the highest group.

Arts and crafts in general fell towards the "play" end of the continuum, not in the sense of being devalued in themselves, but as contenders for priority status in the curriculum. When Mrs. Mercer says that she is opposed to play as major fare for kindergarteners, she is referring to a "cutting and pasting" curriculum that would elevate creative arts expression as a learning tool above traditional skills exercises.

Mrs. Mercer allows time for creative arts expression at least once a week but appears less comfortable and less sure of herself in that area than the more directly academic. The following notes were taken on an arts and crafts day. My goal that day was simply to write down everything the teacher said:

-- Where are the tops to your flowers, Calvin?

-- Are you helping him build? Don't get any more blocks until you use the ones that are out here already.

-- Why are you washing your hands? You don't have to wash your hands. You're just going to do something else messy.

-- Look at all those blocks you didn't use. They're still on the floor.

-- Your picture's beautiful, but you didn't paint over the whole page. Why did you leave the white spaces?

On the other hand, Mrs. Mercer is comfortable with expression in children as required in "work" activities. On my days of observation, I never heard her use "creativity" in the latter context. The preferred would be "thinking." The following is the product of a group essay effort based on a trip the children had taken to the city's art museum. Such an essay was routinely produced following field trips. Children contributed sentences voluntarily, which Mrs. Mercer then printed on a large pad so that all could see the product taking shape.

> Our Trip to the Metropolis Museum of Art
>
> We rode on the elevator to the second floor. We looked at different shapes on the ceiling. We saw a marble with white triangle. We saw a sculpture of Diana standing on a ball.
>
> We went into another room where we saw more sculpture. We saw furniture with sculptures. We rode the elevator to the first floor to look at paintings. We saw Indians and a bear and Noah's Ark. On our way out, we saw a

> painting with a grandfather and a boy blessing the table. We saw a beautiful bedroom. We enjoyed our trip.

Mrs. Mercer and Mrs. Porter met face to face regularly; Mrs. Porter brought Sara to school in the mornings and picked her up after school. In addition, Mrs. Porter had a conference with Mrs. Mercer each time reports were issued. In an initial interview, when I asked Mrs. Porter whether anyone from the school ever called or visited, she answered, "Oh yes, Mrs. Mercer calls me all the time. She's crazy about my little girl." The fact is that, regardless of the motivation behind the comment, Mrs. Porter respected Mrs. Mercer as a person and a teacher. And Mrs. Mercer often expressed that Mrs. Porter was an "intelligent, well-informed person." Mrs. Mercer's argument with Mrs. Porter was that Sara didn't get to school regularly and on time.

The question to be answered is this: What is the major factor in accounting for Sara's academic performance? My observations in the home did not reveal that concentrated, sustained activities to reinforce reading and writing skills were taking place to an extent that would be noteworthy. The atmosphere was stimulating in that Mrs. Porter was literate and took a lively interest in school and community. The one factor that stands out is that Mrs. Porter expects Sara to achieve—absenteeism, home disorganization or sleepiness notwithstanding. She believes that Sara is intelligent and communicates that belief to the child and to anyone else who is around. Whatever may be wanting in terms of regularity of mealtimes and bedtimes, at home Sara is learning to be independent, assertive and confident of her abilities. In the environments of home and school, she hears no other message except that she can perform well academically and that she must in order to (1) please the adults who are significant in her life and (2) maintain status in the "performing" sense. Whether or not she is internalizing whatever she will need to sustain the present level of performance will probably not be apparent for some time.

CHAPTER NINE

HOW PARENTS VIEW THE SCHOOL

Interviews were conducted with sixteen parents. Parents were selected randomly, from among those who responded favorably to a letter sent from the principal, asking permission for the interviewer to go into the homes. All interviews were conducted in parents' homes. Although a questionnaire was devised for the interviewer's use, the questionnaire was not used extensively. By the third interview, the researcher had abandoned use of the questionnaire, except for periodic referral in order to remind herself of key areas that might not have been touched upon in the unstructured interview. The process of the interview tended to be questions put by the interviewer, and answers to those questions given by the parents. Questioning, however, was tempered according to the flow of the conversation at the moment. Most parents addressed several potential questions in the course of answering one. In addition, information was often offered that was additional to the substance of the original questionnaire and yet useful in contributing to the interviewer's understanding. For instance, one parent talked at length of the role her religious faith had played in influencing her to improve her own reading and writing habits as well as the practices of her children. Another, after requesting that the tape be turned off temporarily, went into a back room and brought out materials that had been illegally contributed to the family's resources--the materials were workbooks, readers and games--by a relative who worked at a facility that produced such materials.

The unstructured interview also allowed interviewer and parent to spend maximum time on matters that occupied the parent's attention as opposed to matters that, although they had been legitimately included in the original instrument in an attempt to "cover" major issues according to the researchers' judgment, were of peripheral concern to parents or produced confusion in the asking.

Persons interviewed were mothers primarily, although in a third of the interviews, a father or--in one instance--grandfather participated. In those instances, the interview was begun with the mother or grandmother, often with the man of the house disclaiming any interest in participating. The interviewer would invite the man's participation at every opportunity. For instance, if the mother called into the other room and asked, "Wasn't _____ at Harriet Tubman when you were there?," the interviewer might ask, "Oh, did he grow up in this neighborhood?," then say, "You're the one I should be talking to." Because most of the interviews were conducted within the housing projects and mothers were welfare recipients, it was understandable to the interviewer that fathers might be reluctant about participating before they had ascertained the reason for the visit. Once they had joined in, their input was invaluable. Fathers tended to be more certainly oriented than mothers where the community was concerned. They "got around" more and claimed to know what was where. Mothers almost invariably claimed that they stayed close to home, didn't go in the bars, and didn't seek recreational outlets within the community except among family and close friends.

Of the sixteen households, eleven parents were born and raised in the city, seven in and around the triangle. Of the others, parents came from nearby states--New York, Maryland--or the South. Only one parent was born and raised in the mid-West, none farther west.

Most parents (7) had been living in the neighborhood ten or more years. Five had been living in the neighborhood less than two years. As small as the sample was, the length of residency, on the surface of it, confirmed both the conviction, stated informally by school personnel, that pupils are linked by kinship to long-term residents and that transiency is widespread, with many new families coming into the area, drawn by the projects. In twelve households, there was some previous link with the school, through attendance of parents or relatives of parents.

The average number of children per household in the sample was 2.3. The largest family had six children. Most families (11) interviewed lived in the housing projects. Two lived in houses in the triangle, and two were families who had moved away from the triangle within the last two years but were still living in the section of the city of which the triangle is part.

Homes and apartments represented a great range in style of furnishings and apparent comfort. Even within the high-rise buildings of the projects, nothing could be taken for granted about the internal appearance of an apartment. Some were depressingly stark and underdeveloped whereas others were carefully put together with distinctive taste regarding materials and design and color. The average household was somewhere in-between, comfortable and well-cared-for but not showy.

Children were sometimes present during the interview. Occasionally they chimed in with their own comments. They were seldom discouraged from sitting and listening and commenting. Typically, children were curious initially and listened, then wandered away to play or wandered in and out of the room at will.

Discipline and Instruction. Parents without exception said that they "liked" the school. The major reasons offered included the strictness of discipline, the "back to basics" instructional approach, and the "concernedness" of teachers. Discipline and instruction were linked necessarily in the minds of most parents. As one stated, "How are you going to teach them if they won't listen?" As a consequence, most parents interviewed felt that Harriet Tubman was able to experience its measure of success with basics instruction because teachers were able to maintain order in the classroom. As one parent said, what she liked about Harriet Tubman was the "strictness and the concernedness." "Concernedness" implied that teachers would enforce discipline; disciplining children and caring for them were complementary factors in the minds of parents. As one mother said, "It [strict discipline] kind of (1)* protects them in a lot of ways because, well, the neighborhood ain't really that much different from other neighborhoods, but there's a lot of--well, I guess it goes on everywhere."

Interviewer: "You think the discipline protects the kids, or what do you mean?"

Parent: "...to the extent that they're not able to just walk off whenever they want to."

(2) Another parent equated discipline with parenting, where principal and teachers were concerned:

> Some children don't get discipline at home so that's why they have to get it in school, because some parents will tell [the principal] to give their child discipline ....I have seen where the parents will tell the teacher to give [children] discipline, and I feel as though if they are upright teachers, they're not going to hurt that child. The only reason why they discipline them is because the child has to mind [the teacher] as well as the parents. But if they get that taught at home, they won't have that problem in school, but a lot of parents will tell you that they're by themselves and that they don't have no husband, no man, and they appreciate them helping to discipline their children. Because this is what some of them need. In other words, this school over here is more like a private school... more like what I want for my children.

When parents said "the school," most often their point of reference was the teacher(s) of their child or children--teachers past as well as present. Individuals of secondary importance in the relationship between home and school were the principal, followed by the home-school coordinator, the vice-principal and the counselor. Even if they did not feel they knew him personally, parents had their own sense of what the principal was like and what he contributed to the effective functioning of the school. The principal at Harriet Tubman was spoken of as a disciplinarian. Parents applauded his emphasis on discipline although some were concerned that the punishment, as meted out, be justly applied: that is, that a child not be punished for something he or she did not do, and that the punishment not be overly severe in relation to the infringement.

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* Parenthesized numerals indicate separate sections in field notes and transcribed interviews.

Discipline and the dress code were often linked in parents' conversation. Children are required to "dress up" at least once every two weeks, on assembly days. Upper grade boys, seventh and eighth graders, are expected to wear ties to school everyday. Jeans are not acceptable as school attire, and girls are not allowed to wear pants.

The history of the dress code is that it was in force through the middle fifties and was abolished during the late fifties, under the tenure of a principal considered by many--teachers and parents--to have been lenient to the extent of permissiveness--i.e., relaxation of
(3) standards. When asked by the interviewer, "How do you feel about discipline in the school?" one parent answered: "Oh, I love it. I'm all for it. Because as far as I'm concerned, when they let that dress code go at the school, that was the worst thing they could have done."

Other comments on the dress code included the following:

(4) Parent: ...When [child's name] went to [nearby public school], they wore whatever they wanted to wear to school. It was hard 'cause I used to buy him dress slacks and all that, and all he wanted to wear was sneaks and Wranglers, because that's what they were allowed to wear. Over at Harriet Tubman they can't dress like that, and this is really teaching him 'cause he's a teenager; he's thirteen, and I feel much better because he's picked up over here [at Harriet Tubman]. When he was going to school at [nearby school], my daughter was four. She knew how to tie her shoes and he didn't. When he came up here to Harriet Tubman, he learned everything. He's good in math. The only thing that he has a problem with is spelling. He hates to study."

The above quote shows linkage in the mind of the parent between the dress code and the child's "picking up" or improvement in maturity and school performance.

(5) Parent: ...One thing they do that I admire, this dress-up thing, every other week.

Interviewer: You like that.

Parent: I do. It teaches them how to be men and women, have manners. They don't have to be bummy all the time.

Interviewer: [The dress code] is kind of different.

Parent: Yeah, and [the junior high students) have to be dressed [every day]. I like that part.

Interviewer: It looks nice. I've come in there and seen [the elementary students) all going to assembly.

Parent: And the boys have to have ties; if you don't have on a tie, you can't go in. And the girls have to be dressed up. I like that. Teaching them manners.

Interviewer: A lot of people say if they dress up, they might act a little better.

Parent: Maybe. I don't know if it's true, though.

(6) **Interviewer:** How do you feel about the dress code there? Does it bother you?

Parent: I'm for it. The only time it bothers me is when I really can't afford it because the children really have a limited amount of clothes. And I don't have a washing machine and a dryer, so it's like a hassle keeping up with their things. But I understand the purpose. When you're dressed properly, you do feel better. You know, your whole image is uplifted. And so you react better.

(7) **Parent:** I say *I* might wear pants all the time...but girls don't look right with pants constantly....With the dress code, they're into wearing skirts more.

Parents expressed approval of the dress code in spite of the hardship on them financially. The impression was that parents could say, "I'm doing right by my child" or "I'm giving my child the benefits of a proper upbringing" even though the material advantages they would have liked to offer the child were not available.

A Good School.

Interviewer: What do you think is the main thing that makes a good school? Say, for instance, the reading and writing skills or parent involvement or dedication of teachers? (8)

Parent: Discipline first, because if you don't have discipline, you really don't have anything. You have to get that out of the way before you can teach anything.

Parents' responses as to what makes a good school have to be understood in light of the blend they assumed where the factors of discipline and instruction are concerned. Without exception, the parents interviewed did not believe teachers could do an effective job unless the teachers had a "good hold" on the class. However, parents did not believe that teachers bore total responsibility for the results obtainable: that is, for the success with which teachers were able to maintain order. As one parent expressed it, "...the teachers cannot do it alone. The basics have to start at home. I mean, you can't send (9) your child there and expect the teachers to work miracles. You have to do that yourself. At home, if you've got one or two or three [children], you can do it. You've got thirty or forty kids to deal with...you can't do it."

The atmosphere in which instruction takes place is as much a focus of concern for parents as the content of instruction. When asked directly about the "Three R's" and discipline ("How important do you think it is what they teach?") one parent answered, "It's not so much what they teach, it's how they go about it." A more extended comment along the same lines demonstrates the blend that is conceived of where instruction and the environment of instruction are concerned:

Interviewer: What do you think mostly makes a good school?

Parent: Well, I feel as though what makes for a good school is the teachers and the principal and the (10) way they're teaching children. If they start off letting the children know that they are not there to play, then that's what makes their school disciplined--what they teach them and the way that they care for the school. Because, like I said, Harriet Tubman so far is the best [school] that my children have went to. I have been in there and I have never seen that building dirty, I have never seen no teachers walking around there looking like students or don't care what the children do in the classroom. Every classroom I have been in, all the children are sitting down doing what they know they're supposed to do. I have never been in

> there where the kids are just all around the room doing what they want to do. And I have been in plenty of schols like that, but not over Harriet Tubman.

In expressing why she preferred her son's previous teacher to the current (and why she believed her son preferred him, also), one parent said, "...As soon as they walked in the door, he would tell them, 'If you're not going to do your work, don't even bother to come in the room.'
(11) He don't take no stuff off of them. He would hit them but not to hurt them, but to let them know that they are there for a reason, not to play...."

Teachers who "don't take any stuff" are admired. It is assumed that teachers whose disciplinary control is lax or ineffective will not be able to be good teachers no matter what their preparation. And teachers are identified along those lines more readily than they are identified according to the scores the children have received on standardized tests. Teachers are remembered, also, historically according to their talents as disciplinarians. When asked about a teacher who had gone on to become a political figure in the community, a parent answered, "She was a good teacher. She didn't take nothing off of you. She would crack your fingers with a ruler in a minute."

The extended comment (#10) in the preceding quotation reflects the rule the school had for staff and faculty where dress was concerned: women teachers were expected to wear dresses and men teachers, suits and ties. A few renegades existed among the teachers, but the principal (and teachers who strongly supported his stand) made no secret of the fact that their attitude was that to ignore the dress code was to behave with insubordination. In the opinion of the principal, it was hypocritical to demand that students adhere to a dress code and not expect the same of teachers and staff. For him, it was a matter of example. He referred to an instance in the past wherein a new teacher had worn jeans and "see through" blouses to school, and soon thereafter the style had been adopted by one or more girl students.

In his advocacy of strictly enforced rules and regulations of behavior--that children were quiet in the classroom, that they were unfailingly polite in speaking to adults, and that they did not "play" in the hallways or classrooms nor make unnecessary noise, the principal was self-consciously continuing what he--and others in the school and community--saw as being a tradition begun by Miss Chapin, the original Black principal of the school. Parents, many of whom--twelve of the sixteen households represented in the interviews included parents or close relatives of parents who had attended Harriet Tubman--had longstanding ties with the school, generally believed (because of their own remembrances or those communicated by others) that the school was better in the days of the original principal and that the effort of the current principal to uphold the traditional values was commendable. As stated above, the linkage of the present with the past was deliberate.

One parent stated, "One time we had a meeting over there [at Harriet
(12) Tubman] concerning...the public schools...[and] discipline. I can't remember exactly what it was about. Anyway [the principal] decided to bring up the history of the school and go into all about what Harriet Tubman is really about. And we sat there really listening to how we were [once] young and how our parents raised us and all the things that were involved in discipline. I understand what they're doing. Until it gets way out of proportion, then I guess it's all right. Because, really, I'm pretty lax with the children, you know. Another said, "I tell you, if I was still in [the city] with my grandkids, if Harriet Tubman was still standing, I would send them. I really would. 'Cause even people I have heard that went to Harriet Tubman [who are] grown, they say Harriet Tubman has always been a good, strict school, you know."

The original principal "was a legend, still [is] a legend in the neighborhood," according to one grandparent, a sentiment that was
(13) expressed by everyone in the school (teachers, staff, principal) and community (store owners, parents, residents,) who responded to the mention of the name or chose to bring it up. When asked, "What made Miss Chapin so unusual," comments usually included the following: "She was a strict person." "She didn't take too much." "She was a person of her word." "She did what she said she was going to do."

Although "good and strict" and "strictness and concernedness" were usually mentioned in the same breath, parents often had ambivalent feelings about the manner, occasion and extent of discipline "given" in any one instance. Comment #12 above reflects the watchfulness that was often expressed by parents at the same time they commended in general the seriousness with which the school addressed the issue of discipline.

Given the umbrella approval of "strictness," areas of ambivalence included corporal punishment; misapplied punishment (wrong child); observed incidents that may or may not have involved the parent's own child; and punishment considered too severe for the deed.

One parent complained that her daughter, an earnest student, anxious to please the teachers by maintaining both good grades and good behavior, was shouted at mistakenly and yanked out of line; as a result, the child became withdrawn and unhappy for some days afterwards. The parent expressed that she feared such an incident, if it recurred, would sour her daughter on school. Another parent complained that her son was forced to write "2,000 times--'I must bring my ruler to school'" because he had left the ruler at home by mistake. She felt the punishment was severe under the circumstances.

Other comments, falling in one or more of the categories above, included the following:

> (14) I had went to the school when people were being examined that day. A lot of kids were getting examined. I was coming down the hall and ____ hollered at this boy. ____ asked the boy what was he doing out of the auditorium. And [the boy] told ____ he had to go to the bathroom. And ____ hollered at him; I mean, the whole hallway you could hear ____. ____ told [the boy] to get against the wall...and all this time, I thought that wasn't _even_ necessary.

> (15) What I have seen [of the discipline practices] so far is half-half. I can't say how it could be, because I have never saw what a child have done, but I have saw sometime how he got punished for it. So I say it's in-between... Now if a child curse at a teacher or the principal, yeah, he should be disciplined for that, but not overly extreme, 'cause kids has feelings, too....They do have some very rude kids...but there is still a right way to do it. I would give any teacher permission to correct my child, but don't over-correct my child if _I_ don't correct him.

> (16) I hear a lot of parents say, "better not hit my child"... but I told my children just like this: I have never gave ____ permission to hit them, but I know that if he hit them, he hit them for a reason....And they've been in there three years and he has never hit them or...sent for me.... So they know what I'm saying, that if he has to chastize them, I'm gonna chastize them, plus I'm going to tell him that I never gave him permission because he has never asked ...for permission; but I have worked...around children, and I know that some children will cause you to hit them.

As stated above, the teacher is the most direct link to the school for parents. If parents liked the teacher(s) their children had at the time of the interview, they were more favorably disposed towards the school than otherwise. In effect, a parent might say, "Last year, when [name of child] had Miss X, I wasn't too happy, but the year before, she had Mr. W., and she made a lot of progress. Now she has Miss C., and I'm just waiting to see whether she'll pick up again."

Occasionally, the success of the school experience, in the parent's
(17) view, could depend on the sex of the teacher: "He had a man teacher over
there last year, and [the teacher] taught them...to do their homework...
like a game....So now he's having problems with this woman teacher, which
he don't like [woman teachers]. I never could figure this out; as long
as he's got a man teacher, I don't have no bad results. And just as soon
as they give him a woman teacher, I get all these problems."

Understandably then, answers to the question, "What _don't_ you like
(18) about the school?" often included a reference to a teacher or teachers—
e.g., "Every now and then some of the teachers...I don't care for the

teachers--some of them." Following such an answer, the parent would recount some specific incident involving her own child and a teacher--a disciplinary action or one that indicated for the parent a "personality conflict"--i.e., some treatment of the child considered to have been unfair.

Certain teachers' names were mentioned far more freqently than others, and those teachers were among the ones who had taught at the school for twenty years or more. Those few teachers seemed to carry the weight of much of the image the school had in the minds of parents; considering this fact in light of the above--that parents characterized the school according to their experiences with individual teachers--it can be appreciated that those few teachers over the years had impressed themselves and their style upon more individuals--parents and, in some instances, grandparents--than teachers more recently employed. It is significant, also, that those teachers were mentioned most frequently among the "top" teachers by school personnel.

Where both discipline and instruction are concerned, parents place considerable responsibility on the influence of the home and support of parents for what the school was able to do. The general attitude can be summed up in one parent's statement that "You can't teach a child in school if you don't have the cooperation at home."

Among suggestions for improving the school, parents offered most frequently strict discipline and more extracurricular activities--i.e., activities of a social or athletic nature that children might participate in after school.

Parents believed they had adequate opportunities to become involved in school matters, but the question, "Do you feel you have had an impact on school policies and practices?" did not strike a chord for several reasons: (1) parents conceived of their input into the school in an individual-to-individual way--i.e., whether or not they felt they were welcomed inside the classrooms where their children were learning and whether or not the teachers were receptive to them in discussing their children's progress; (2) parents, for the most part, did not envision themselves as having the expertise or the power to determine the direction of the school in an ongoing sense. The school and what it was about was a "given" that they responded to either positively or negatively but nonetheless passively except in the circumstance of a crisis--and the crises were individual ones: what had been done or not been done where a particular child was concerned.

On the whole, parents were generous in their assessments of the dedication and capabilities of school personnel. Where they could identify failings in specific situations, they looked to specific factors in those situations for placing blame: inability of the teacher to enforce discipline; "listening" or not listening on the part of the child; the child's attitude in wanting or not wanting to learn. They were grateful, for the most part, that their children were attending a school wherein personnel had a "hold" on children's behavior--i.e., cared enough about the children and their education to provide an environment conducive to learning. One parent expressed her opportunities for involvement in these terms:

(19) I remember years back that you couldn't go to school and [have teachers] show you what the children were doing--you couldn't volunteer to do it...but that's when the parents complained. But now you can go there if you want to and stay from nine in the morning till three o'clock, until the children get out: volunteer. So that's really up to you when your children come home with work you don't know anything about, and you don't care or try to find out; that's on you, not on the teachers. Because I feel as though they're doing their job, the majority of them, any time they are willing to teach the parents and the children, too. I feel as though they're doing more than their job. But what I can't stand is to find a teacher that don't really have a time to teach nobody. But over there so far I haven't met a teacher like that.

Home and Community. Parents considered themselves to be less strict at home with children than school personnel were, at school. They experienced considerable conflict within themselves regarding the mobility of children--how much freedom children were allowed to have in moving about the neighborhood. On the one hand, parents recognized that children had to learn to cope with their environment--that becoming independently mobile (including fighting, at times) was a part of growing up--and on the other hand, there was the desire to protect children from harm. Often parents accused themselves of being "over-protective," although the tone of voice said, "I'm trying to be a good parent under the circumstances." The circumstances in their view included the prevalence of fighting and bullying among youngsters; exposure to addicts (drugs and alcohol); intimidation and/or abuse by older youth and sometimes adults; "cussin" and arguing; and exposure of children to attitudes and behaviors that were "too grown."

Parents expressed the conflict in many ways:

(20) I don't know; it seems like when you're strict on them and try to keep them too tight or too close to you, those are the ones that seem to really go wild once they get out there, get loose. But, to me, I try to--I don't know--relate to them. I don't want to be bossy--you know "You look up to me." I started young, so I guess we got to do it together.

(21) Interviewer: You don't consider yourself to be strict?

Parent: No. I don't think I'm strict.

Interviewer: But you don't have any problems?

Parent: No more than usual.

Interviewer: Do you feel you're less strict than your parents were with you?

Parent: Yes.

(22) **Parent:** I don't...in the summer let them go around like that [to nearby recreational center] because... when they're going swimming, the kids have a tendency to try to pull them under the water and all that kind of stuff, and there's a lot of people say I'm overprotective with my kids, but I just can't help.

(23) **Parent:** My mother was very strict on us; she didn't give us too much headway. Sometimes you don't know if they're good or bad, so you have to give them a try. If you don't give them a try, you'll never know about these kids these days, because they're so fast...you have to. You can't hold them so tight. I trust her pretty well.

Parents were saying, "I'm not as strict on my children as my parents were on me." At the same time, they were saying, "I'm overprotective." Most claimed that they held their children close to home as much as possible, and that younger ones did not have access to neighborhood recreational facilities unless accompanied by an adult or older sibling. They did not feel, however, that their children were being denied play and recreation; the consensus was that "We have a lot of fun at home, just among ourselves." The "ourselves" often included family and close friends. According to mothers, male children, in particular, weren't always acquiescent to restrictions imposed on them:

(24) Tic-tac-toe, checkers, they try to get everything through the house. Basketball--they get a hoop, a hanger, and put [the] hoop on my door, and they take a sock and play basketball. 'Cause, see, I don't have them going outside, up and down the street....My son who's twelve, that's the one...I told him..."I'm tired of whipping your behind. Aren't you tired of getting whipped?" I said, "I'll try to sit down and reason with you--you gonna do what's asked of you." I mean, we have rules and regulations in this house....But that's the only one. Because...he wants to get in this little clique around here. And that's the very one he was scared to death of when we moved here....

That same parent said of her seventeen-year-old:

(25)

> Barbara will be eighteen [but] she still don't have no male company! (Laughs and laughs.) She still don't have no male company! I said, when she come out of school, then she can have male company. I said, she gonna finish school....I said, she ain't missing nothing. I said, why does she need *heartache* and *pain*? Why should she be thrown into a situation that she have no control over?

Parents' expectations of children generally were that they stay out of trouble--acts committed upon them as well as committed by them--do their homework, complete their chores at home (washing dishes, cleaning room, putting out trash, and the like), and obey parental orders. Children's time and activities were not structured, on the whole, beyond those basic requirements: that is, parents did not attempt to keep children "busy" perpetually and definitively. The significant factor is that parents felt that they had to hold children close to them and close to home--that, in their minds, because of the environment outside the home, restrictions of children's mobility indicated good parenting. Whether they succeeded or not is not so important an issue in understanding parents' conception of responsible parenting as the fact that they needed to believe that they succeeded.

One parent summed up the prevailing attitudes about outside-and-inside the home.

(26)

> Well, what can I say? You know, it's a place to live. I live inside the house. I don't live outside the house. And this is how I was raised. Long as you have a unit--live in a unit and pay your gas, electric and heat, you can't worry about the surroundings. You don't live outside. I mean, personally I don't like living down here but...it's a place, and this is all I can afford right now.

Of course, parents did "worry" about the outside where their safety and the safety of their children were concerned. However, the statement above expresses the fact that families in the projects--high-rise and low-rise buildings--as well as families on surrounding streets did see their homes as havens and did believe--needed to believe--that once they had closed their doors, they could create an environment that fostered traditional kinds of values for themselves and their children.

Responses regarding the neighborhood itself were varied. Parents who liked the neighborhood pointed to familiarity with the environment and people--the fact that friends and family were there and that memory associations were strong. Some parents expressed that most neighborhoods they would have access to in the city, according to their present income, would be about the same. Considering the bottom to top geographical designations (see discussion of boundaries), parents never expressed a desire to move towards the bottom, though several revealed that they would welcome a chance to move in the direction of the top. Dissatisfactions with the neighborhood centered around fighting, primarily among children; disapproval of neighbors' lifestyles and behavior--cussin', swearing, permitting too much "running in and out"; disapproval of other parents' disciplining of children--own children as well as the children of others; conviction that residents were passive about their life-circumstances ("People have accepted their condition. They can't get out unless guided," complained one parent.) Parents without exception identified Harriet Tubman as being a factor that contributed favorably to their remaining in the neighborhood. The consensus was that the school, in its attempts to uphold the traditions--"manners," instruction in the "basics," proper dress and behavior--was making a stand in the face of continuing urban decay and transiency.

Parents usually said, "I keep to myself." Or, "I don't get involved with people around here." That attitude prevailed even in the high rises where it was evident that parents knew one another, at least as acquaintances, knew who was on what floor, who the children were, and what other apartments were like. The sentiment of solitariness was expressed also by parents living in houses or low rises. Parents needed to believe both that they were set apart from neighbors with respect to aspirations or lifestyle and that they were enough known and accepted to be protected (27) from harm. The parent who said, "I stay by myself" and "I'm overprotective with my children" could also say, "Living in this neighborhood...if I leave out of here at night I have a sense of security...because most of the boys around here are my son's friend and they know [me]...and really [I] don't be worrying about stuff like that. But it's the ones that come in the neighborhood [from outside]."

The ideal relation to the neighbors for parents was one of apartness tempered by the warmth and protectiveness that was afforded by having a few close friends and some family nearby.

A thorny issue for all parents was that of the disciplining of the children of others in the neighborhood. Neighborhood friendships and even family relations had at times been strained or severed because of the conflicting opinions of parents about who should discipline their children and how. The following quotes reflect the lack of consensus regarding the disciplining of the children of others:

> (28) And with all [my children's] friends, if they doing something wrong, I'm gonna get on them, whether they like it or not. And if I see [my children's friends] some place during school hours they know they not supposed to be, I'll fuss at them, tell them, "Look, get your behind back to school. You know, that's

> where you belong." That's how it was when we was coming up....I hop on all of them. And a few of them I have popped. That's how we got to be friends, from me popping them. Trying to, you know, show off--"You ain't my mother. You don't tell me what to do!" And I might laugh at the boys. I might punch them on the fat part of their arm. I said, "Look, let me tell you something: I might not be your mother but I care, and you need your education. Now get your behind up there." And give them a little shove....

(29) ...I am a parent, and I don't want no other parent hitting my child, so I'm not going to hit no other parent's child.

Regarding a relative:

(30) She had wanted me to let her little boy jump down [the steps], and I would say, "John, don't jump down like that because you gonna hurt yourself." One day...I was sitting down here doing something, and I said, "If you jump down those steps, I'm going to paddle your little behind." So he came flying down the steps... so I paddled his little butt,and his mother was up there. And he started crying, so I said, "Why don't you stop crying, wipe your face," and she came down and said, "Well, I don't appreciate you hitting my son because I'm his mother. If you have anything to say, you should tell me about it--right?"...She caught me off guard, so I looked at her, and she went back upstairs. So I went on and got my shopping done, and I went back upstairs, and I said, "I don't appreciate you approaching me about that because kids are out there...you know...he's just like a child of mine; he ain't nothing but a little boy to me--a baby." And she said, "You're a mother, and you know you're not supposed to be hitting my child." I said, "If I had took down his pants and hit his butt the first time, then he wouldn't have been doing it the second time..." So she went on about it....

Although the quotes above reflect the parents' attitudes about hitting the children of other parents, the same lack of consensus was apparent regarding verbal disciplining, interference with children's fighting, and even the approaching of other parents about a child's behavior. Parents might say, "Come and tell me when my child does something wrong." Or parents might complain that other parents "don't want to hear" about their children's behavior and "don't want you to say anything to them [parents or children] about it."

It is noteworthy that much of the same lack of consensus existed in parents' attitudes about corporal punishment in the school. (See #16.) Although parents perceived themselves to be reasonable in their own attitudes towards and monitoring of the disciplining of their children by others, most believed that many other parents were not so reasonable. As a consequence, parents expressed much dismay about other parents who "let their children do anything they want" and who "don't believe their children ever do anything wrong." Pervasive was parents' conviction about the existence of a permissive and destructive family (or families) down the block of around the corner or on the next floor on the high rise:

(31) Interviewer: Over the last ten years, what would you say about the neighborhood--the major kinds of things that have happened?

Parent: You know, the worst thing that I can say in this neighborhood is these little children down the street right here....

Interviewer: What do they do?

Parent: Uh-uh, not what do they do, what don't they do? I mean, the mother sits on the steps looking at them--they're throwing bottles, breaking windows, throwing rocks. I was sitting on the porch one day, and the little boy threw a rock in my lap. And they got a little girl--she's about eight or nine years old; and for the past three or four years you could look out your window in the summertime at two or three o'clock in the morning and she might be coming from around the corner--little old thing. I think they got put out of ______ school, because they would never go to school, and when they go in the house at night, they come out first thing in the morning, and they look just like they did when they went in at night....They just terrorize the neighborhood. And you can sit your trash on the outside, and they get sticks and beat it up and...their mother sits down and watches them and won't say nothing at all....

(32) Then there's one down the block--her mother lets her do what she wants to do or go around the corner and stay out till dark.

(33) The only problem I really have in here is the children [from a different floor]. There's a little box out there in the hallway--a little closet-way--and they goes out there and they cuts out all the lights on the floor. And we

stayed up here a whole week. They cut all these peoples' wires to the telephones up over top of everybody's door. And I don't know who's bothering these children....

The desire for self-improvement educationally and vocationally was expressed by parents interviewed; however, the specific goal of improvement and the means of getting there--that is, the where and the how--were usually stated indecisively, often with references to the past and to what were conceived of as having been missed opportunities, and with references to the frustrations of the present:

(34) I have tried to go back [to school], but the problems of my marriage...the tension....And I said I was going to go back, but I still would have to wait, because it's just too much. Because I'm working two days, then I have to help each one of (6) kids when they come home from school. I be tired. Not just because, you know, the two days; but I have to run errands...taking them to the dentist, shopping...And trying to keep this house up and keep them in order and buying them things, trying to get bargains. And that's just too much. And then I have to deal with their personalities when they come in here.

Interviewer: You mentioned going back to school. What would you take?

Parent: Just for reading and math. And, you know, equivalency. I never got my diploma....At one time I was thinking about nursing, but they be phasing [funding] out, bumping this...I said, I'm late for that, too....When I was in ninth grade...[my] teacher told me...you should go to modeling school. Because I never was this fat.... I always was thin, bony....She said, "I'm gonna set everything up for you." I...got hooked up with this husband of mine and just blew my mind, right....And it just destroyed everything.

Most parents were taking or had recently taken a course or courses, usually at a university extension or a technical/professional academy. Favored areas were cosmetology, Spanish, psychology, sewing, medical and social para-professions, accounting and typing. One parent who had gone to school on a government grant to become a hairdresser stated that she later "started getting into some kind of social work...but didn't follow up on it." She said, "I think I might go back and continue my education. I don't mind working with kids...small children...maybe something like an aide...." Courses from differing disciplines often were taken at the same time--e.g., Spanish and accounting or psychology and typing. Only one parent interviewed seemed to have launched herself educationally in a specific direction in a specific program. That parent was, by observable indications, better placed economically, because of the apparent stability of the husband's income, than other parents interviewed.

All the parents expressed hopes that their children would go "all the way" in school. "All the way" might mean high-school graduation or college, depending on the parent's perception of the child's abilities and inclinations as well as depending upon the parent's perception of his/her own abilities. Parents who considered themselves to have been above-average students tended to expect that their children also would be above average. On the whole, parents had a wait-and-see attitude towards their children's chances for school success. They often used the word "slow" in describing children who were bringing home low grades although the designation was not intended necessarily to be fixed and unchangeable: "Bill could do better if he really gets started." "If and when Jane gets herself together, she'll be above average." "Tom is slow, but, you know, it takes a while for boys to settle down." "Barbara is not catching on, because her attention span is like that (snaps fingers)." One parent demonstrated her coping with the term "slow" in the following manner: "Well, my son in the sixth grade, he's like slow and well--he's not slow, he's slow to catch on to things, but once he catches on to it, you know he's good at it." Flexibility in interpretation of the word "slow" is demonstrated in the following parent's account of her son's reading difficulties: "He did have a reading problem before, and [the teacher] says over the summer he has improved. He was like slow, on his level." Another parent (See quote #4.) linked dress and achievement: "He's not retarded or anything, but he's slow, and he never did any work or anything [in a previous school] and... they wore whatever they wanted to wear to school."

In one instance, parents disagreed with each other about the designation of their child's ability.

(35) Father: Delores is about a "C" student, anyway. Sue can be an "A" student. But Delores gonna be about average. 'Cause it just ain't there, you know.

Mother: You always saying that! "It's not there"--You should tell her she's just as smart as Sue. Maybe she can do as well.

Father: Well, I don't think I should lie to her.

Mother: It's all who applies themselves....She only does certain things (indicating interest). She works with the hands and likes the housecleaning.

The foregoing accounts indicate that parents, although they were affected by school performance and school terminology in assessing their children's abilities, were not bound by those. There was always, at the least, a dialogue that continued with themselves and their children regarding the possibilities of significantly improved school performance.

Parents of children making high grades claimed that they assisted children with homework when asked to do so, but that such assistance was rarely necessary, as the children worked well independently. They did not feel that they, as parents, had to push the achievers towards accomplishment. All parents insisted that they kept books in the home--purchased from stores and/or borrowed from the public library—although parents of achievers tended to be more specific about what they considered to be aids to the child's intellectual development, as in the following:

(36)

> Before Janice got into school, the baby sitter that kept her [had a daughter] about five or six years older than Janice. And the babysitter would...have school with them. Janice knew a lot before she got into school that most kids don't know. She could write her name and she could count to a hundred, and write her ABC's, spell words--cat, dog, and all that. Even before kindergarten. Plus I had a tablet I had bought for her and sometimes let her write things down, and bought her educational toys and stuff. It helps a lot....

However, no generalization can safely be made about parents' perceptions regarding why a children was an achiever. Certain parents felt that one child just "had it" and another didn't; others believed that their own input in some way was responsible.

Black English. In the initial nine interviews, parents were asked whether they had heard the expression "Black English" and how they felt about the use of Black English in the schools. There was some confusion about the exact meaning of the expression. Several parents were of the understanding Black English was slang--"You cool, man"; "I dig that"; "You far out"; "solid"; and the like. One response indicated the parent had confused "Black English" with "Black History." Most parents had heard the expression even though they weren't all certain of its meaning; exposure to the expression had occurred through its use on an occasional television program and in newspaper commentaries addressing the subject. Whether they understood "Black English" to be slang or dialect, parents were in agreement that standard English should be taught in the classroom. There was ambivalence regarding Black English use outside the classroom; parents believed that Black people should talk like Black people--"every group has its own language." On the other hand, the following quotes are indicative of parents' attitudes about Black English in the classroom:

(37)

> I don't see no sense in why we can't use [Black English] on ourselves, but you can use it so much our children can have a twelve-year education and go to college and use it too much—he's not going to get a job over the White man. It would be

a long time. No, a Black man couldn't have a job he could apply for. It doesn't sound right.

(38) You know I've never really given it a thought....Well, the way I feel is that the teachers should teach what they are taught to teach because a child is going to pick up [Black English] anyway; don't need teachers to teach them that; they need teachers to teach them what they don't know.... I think that the teacher should correct the child....If a child goes for a job interview...now I don't care if it's a Black or White that's interviewing that child, he ain't gonna get no job. Because, see, mine will pick [Black English] up around me, anyhow. And they'll correct me, and I know [my talk] is wrong, and I know the correct way of talking.

(39) I think it's [teachers speaking Black English] stupid. When [teachers] teach them that, when they get out of school, they still have to talk to everybody else. And when they go to get a job and [fill out an application] you can't make that in Black English.

(40) To a degree I think [Black English] should be respected, but by the same token...the kids are not always going to be in the classroom. They're going to broaden--they're going further, and the school that they may go into [later] may not understand the language that they are speaking, so I feel [their talk] should be respected to a degree, but by the same token, they should be taught that there is a way to express themselves other than Black English.

Parents had no problem with Black English from an aesthetic or "ethnic" point of view; they liked the fact that Blacks had their own way of speaking. At the same time, as the previous quotes demonstrate, they believed that use of standard English was necessary for getting jobs and advancing in the wider society.

Reading and Writing. Magazines favored by parents were such home-improvement magazines as Apartment Life and Good Housekeeping as well as Black publications: Ebony, Jet, Essence. Other magazines mentioned by parents included Newsweek, Time, Cosmopolitan, Playboy, Sports Illustrated, Psychology Today, Ladies Home Journal, and other popular publications.

Publications most obvious to the eye were (in order of their prevalence) the home-improvement organs, the Black-oriented publications and sports publications--the latter the favored material of boys in the home. Other reading materials on display were encyclopedias, usually World Book or Brittanica, sometimes Childcraft or other children's editions. The above-mentioned materials were commonplace. Several homes of the sixteen or more visited contained bookshelves with a range of reading materials: novels, histories, short story collections, collections of plays, religious materials. Also common, in addition to the set of encyclopedias, was a book or two lying about the living room--sometimes a children's book, a romantic novel, or a collection of plays. The latter seemed to be favored by girls in upper primary grades who enjoyed reading. More magazines than daily newspapers were in evidence. Magazines were not necessarily current, but looked as if they had been well-handled. My impression was that magazines, once purchased, were not read from cover to cover and put aside, but were "lived with" for a time--picked up and thumbed through at odd moments.

Reading materials for parents and children had been obtained through the following: supermarkets; bargain stores and other general shopping outlets; mail order--popular book clubs or books advertised in a magazine; public and/or school libraries; relatives; hand-me-downs from older children; and trading (books for books). Bookstores as such were not routinely mentioned. Obviously, the expense of purchasing books and magazines was a factor. As one parent said:

(41)

> I don't buy magazines any more because they're too expensive for what you get out of them. I used to buy a lot. I remember when you could get ladies' magazines for thirty-five cents. Now, they're a dollar and a half.

She said that she told her children to set their own priorities, based on the allowance they received:

> Like I say, if you want something, it's for your convenience and your pleasure. I feel as though if you want it, you can get it. You can walk right down there to Acme, because they have [books] in there sometimes. And then around here, like the store here on the corner, sometimes they might have books. Then there's a newsstand on the avenue....

Other than expense, the other reason that bookstores were not routinely mentioned was probably that parents tended to select books and magazines on the way to doing something else (including flipping through a television guide) or as part of the experience of general shopping as opposed to "shopping for books." Although there were not bookstores as such in the triangle, there were used books on sale in thrift shops and odds-and-ends shops. The nearest retail bookstore was as close as the nearest public library.

Parents often read materials their children brought from school--The Weekly Reader, for instance. One parent of a fourth-grader--an avid reader and top student--said she read all the books her daughter signed out of the library "to see what she's reading."

As many parents said they didn't read well or much at all as said they did. All, however, wanted their children to read well and to read a great deal. With few exceptions, parents said they themselves had been disinterested in school due to "distractions" and had been "average" students; those who had dropped out of school had done so usually to get married and/or to have a child; but all wanted their children to finish high school at the least. Primary among the reasons they gave for wishing they had received more and better education was that they could then have assisted their own children with homework more than they felt they were able. The quote below eloquently illustrates this:

(42) Interviewer: How about yourself--do you like to read?

Parent: No. I use me for an example because I'm not a good reader. And I tell them, "Look, you see, I can't help you when you need help with your homework. Is that how you want to be when you have kids? I mean, you all sit around and call me... 'w, mama, you dumb', and all this and that. I said, "How would you feel if your child told you that?" I say, "So now you know you got to do better if you want to improve your child." See, I got plans of going back to school myself.

In many instances, then, parents, believing they had short-changed their own academic development, tried to interest their children in doing what they admitted they rarely did--a quantity of reading and writing and study. "Go get a book"--as well-meaning as the intention might be--was often a filler suggestion, used when children wanted to go outside or when they were too much underfoot or had brought home no school work. Parents who had not grown up as readers themselves and had not developed the interest often fell back on the notion that they had to force children to read, a strategy which, according to their recounts of experiences with their own parents, had not worked with them either, when they were children. More frustration was expressed regarding boys and reading than girls.

The majority of parents had attended inner-city public schools and had graduated from high school. Several had taken some college courses. One father was a college graduate. Reasons given for wanting children to be capable readers and writers included: (1) good readers had increased job opportunities as adults; (2) everyone needs to be able to read instructions and directions; (3) being able to read increased facility in "getting around the city"; and (4) the ability to read signs and notices. It must be understood that the foregoing reasons are based on parents' focusing on the current ages of their children. Parents tended not to speculate about what their children's lives would be like as adults in specific terms--type of job, place of residence, lifestyle. Their attitude was that they wanted the "best," whatever that might be according to the child's eventual definition for him/herself and the opportunities society offered. They were not saying that all they wanted ultimately was that their offspring should be able to "get around the city," etc. Except for wanting good employment opportunities for their children, they tended to focus on the advantages of literacy in terms of immediate or soon-to-be-immediate applications.

Few parents said that they did much writing. Writing, for those who did write, consisted primarily of business and personal letters or, occasionally, diaries. Otherwise, writing was used for notes to teachers, grocery lists and in assisting children with homework.

Parents valued knowing how to write in being able to (1) fill out job applications and other essential forms and applications; (2) communicate in a situation of crisis, when speech wasn't possible (as in illness); (3) communicate when calling on the telephone was not possible or did not produce results; and (4) express oneself. The latter reason was the least-mentioned. A couple of parents expressed that they believed writing well could come naturally if one was a good reader.

Children, according to parents and to the children who were present at the time of the interviews or were present on other occasions (in the homes I visited several times) had varied uses for writing. They used writing in play, particularly in "playing school," whether the participants were other children or makeshift playmates, such as dolls who were given assignments. Playing school was widely done, at home as well as in transition moments in school--e.g., after recess before the teacher returned to the room. Types of writing mentioned included poems; short stories; plays; "little notes about myself"; notes to parents (anger or affection notes); letters to relatives; diaries. Children often enjoyed making cartoons--drawings with writing underneath. The samples that were proudly shown were usually the cartoons.

My impression was that voluntary writing was periodic rather than daily.

Some parents claimed that they rarely received notes from school but were called. Others claimed that they received notes. Contents of notes dealt with behavior problems or conferences with the teacher or upcoming meetings or health warnings (measles epidemic, etc.) or special occasions such as trips.

One way parents often became involved with school affairs--volunteering for trips and/or classroom assistance or working as a parent-scholar or working with the parents' advisory group--was that they were summoned by a teacher to discuss a misbehaving child and in the process became interested in observing the classroom and eventually interested in further participation.

Children's homework provided occasion for significant literacy events in the home. Homework was responsible for much of parents' perceptions of the quality and content of the education their children were receiving as well as of their children's abilities to cope with school work. Comments about children's homework were usually specific:

(43) She wrote six book reports this year....She has to write just about every day, especially science.

(44) In the beginning of the year, they put him (in the high achievers' section), and I knew he wasn't supposed to be there, but the homework they gave him, he seemed to do better than the work he does now. He's in a slower section now; he was doing better when he was in the higher section because he seemed to be more interested--he seemed to be determined to do. In the higher section he had homework every night, but he doesn't have it every night now--just stuff he has to get together on Friday. His sister has reports every day. I think they get enough homework--like spelling words. I know Joyce gets fifteen spelling, while Janice doesn't get any this year. They're supposed to be doing book reports; they get their spelling words on Monday. They have a spelling test on Friday.

(45) My older daughter is learning how to write cursive in school, and the others try to copy.

(46) The only thing I have to help him with is his reading and spelling. The spelling is very poor because he hates to study. For one thing, he doesn't read when he's at home. He's got all kinds of books, but it's hard to get him to study. The only thing he really likes is math and gym; that's all he likes; other than that, you have a problem with him. But any kind of school work with math he'll do.

(47) She loves to read; that's all she'll do, and write. Now she's the type of child, when it comes down to her homework, she does it. But she don't really want to do it. It'll take her three or four hours to do her homework. If she don't have any homework, she'll get into some kind of book--or she'll write a whole story out of a book....If my children's homework is something I don't know anything about, I'll write them a note--please give me an example.

(48) Billy's weak in math. He's in this fifth-grade class because he can read out-of-sight...but his math is really weak. Billy has missed one thing, and that is multiplication, and I think I'm going to have to be the one who really buckles him down on his multiplication. I told him if you can't add, you can't multiply; if you can't multiply, you can't divide....

(49) You can make Tommy sit and look at a paper two or three hours, he's only going to learn so much. You can sit Walter to the table a half hour, and he'll learn his spelling words just like that....

In addition, schools are compared informally according to the homework a child is receiving—a former school or a school the child of a relative or friend is attending.

(50)

> At the other school, the teacher let them do a little more handwriting than giving them all this [ditto] paper and putting it in the book. In the kindergarten they had to really deal with their handwriting.

Children had designated times to do their homework, usually immediately after school. In some homes they were allowed a snack first or were required to perform simple chores. As suggested in a quote above, depending on the child, the doing of homework might become an all-evening task or might consume only minutes' time.

Although this study can provide nothing conclusive about the home environment and achievement or about the factors that caused one child of a family to be an achiever academically and the other(s) not to be, given apparently similar abilities, a complex of factors are suggested by the interviews and observations, including a parent's manner of dealing with one child as opposed to another--e.g., firstborn; temperament of child; marital circumstances--as well as the parents' abilities to assist children in substantive ways to translate a desire that was mutually felt (parents wanted their children to read and write well; children wanted to read and write well) into everyday practices. Parents of achieving children tended to be more interested than parents of non-achieving children in trends and issues outside the home, whether they read or not. They were more likely to be present at neighborhood meetings, to know who key persons were by name or acquaintance and to be vocal about what they felt was amiss or not so in matters affecting the home--management of projects, behavior of local politicians, quality of merchant delivery on the avenue. They seemed more able than parents of non-achieving children to make the concerns of the world outside the home felt within the home. A third factor is that parents of achieving children communicated to their children that they were capable of achieving and were expected to do so.

Rather than findings, I would suggest that the foregoing study has identified certain themes prevalent in the community, as I encountered it, concerning home, school, community, education and literacy. These themes include the following:

(1) belief that formal education generally and attainment of literacy specifically are essential preparations for economic or job mobility, in conjunction with uncertainty about specific measures in home and community that would ensure realization of the goal;

(2) appreciation for a structured learning environment;

(3) instructional and organizational processes that feature a dominant, often authoritarian, figure;

(4) reference to a code of behavior of some type as an enabling factor in accomplishing organizational and instructional goals;

(5) belief that community literacy levels are inadequate for what is needed by people for economic well-being in the society;

(6) distrust for non-traditional instructional environments for children, seen as being ploys to prevent people from achieving benefits available to persons in the dominant society, in favor of emphasis on the "basics"--traditional studies taught in a traditional manner in a traditional environment;

(7) conviction that parents share responsibility for children's education--in large part a matter of enforcement of behavior attributes so that instruction can proceed smoothly;

(8) perception by parents of involvement in school as being a matter of maintaining communication with individuals, primarily teachers, and providing support for school activities--e.g., assistance in classroom and accompanying children on trips--rather than as participation in groups organized for collective action;

(9) consciousness of and response to tradition;

(10) belief that there are forces within the community that, if not kept under strict control, would act to prevent progress or disrupt what has been achieved;

(11) skepticism at worst and a crossed-fingers-attitude at best about the likelihood of improvement of the immediate community environment--places and people and processes--as an outcome to be effected by the resident population;

(12) sense of insecurity regarding the survival of the community in its present character, racial and otherwise, even granted initiatives of the resident population;

(13) anxiety about confrontation--avoiding it, meeting it, controlling it--together with the belief that the threat of confrontation is ever-immediate;

(14) conviction that a better life is possible and will somehow occur for oneself in time, in conjunction with lack of belief that one's neighbors will improve their lot;

(15) perception by parents of children's time at home and in the community in terms of constraint--preventing them through force of parental authority and values training from causing harm to others or being harmed--rather than through planned, specific activities.

Parents look to school personnel to provide means for their children to acquire the benefits of the "tradition of excellence," as promoted by the school. That education, parents hope--combining social and academic attributes--will lead the way for their young to enter adult society armed with advantages they, as parents, did not have, either for reason of lack of availability or their own negligence. As such, parents do not focus upon the immediate community and its leadership or residents as models in any collective sense for what they would want their children prepared to inherit; in other words, schooling is intended to lead the way to a different--and by implication, superior, though not described in specific terms--community than that the children are experiencing.

The school in its placement in the community--for those who relate to it by virtue of having attended themselves or by virtue of having children in attendance or by reason of employment, present or past, and for those few individuals who maintain involvement in school matters because their children at one time attended--is intended to provide a ticket to a life better than that represented by the surrounding community, particularly that aspect represented by the projects, from which at least half the children are drawn. Children then are urged, in one way or the other, to turn their sights higher than the environment they and their parents inhabit while, in fact, that environment is the one which represents the reality they know.

CHAPTER TEN

MRS. GRAY

> Mrs. Gray is a terrific teacher, because she is totally dedicated and she's very thorough. And she sets her standards high, as I do. Now, she's going to have a slow class next year and she will take them far. She is totally interested in the welfare of the children. She does not let them get away with anything; but yet the way she handles things is beautiful.
>
> ---Mrs. Mercer

When I first explained to Harriet Tubman teachers my purpose for studying their school, many of them urged me to make certain to observe Mrs. Gray, a teacher who, I was to hear countless times, "had it all together," "held her class in the palm of her hand," and "never raised her voice." The students who completed a year or two under her tutelege could invariably read, write, and speak Standard American English well, teachers told me. Over the thirty years that Mrs. Gray has taught at Harriet Tubman she has enjoyed bringing low-achieving first grade students up to their potential---a level that frequently exceeded anyone's expectations. According to her peers, she was the best teacher in the school, or, indeed, that they had every seen.

In 1975, Mr. Best surprised Mrs. Gray and assigned her the top first grade class to teach. Mrs. Mercer had been their kindergarten teacher and their achievement was already noteworthy. Consistently, Mrs. Mercer's kindergarten classes score in the 90th percentile on the Stanford Early Achievement Test. Mr. Best was curious to see what heights these students could achieve if they continued their education over the next two years with Mrs. Gray.

Over the next two years, Mrs. Gray and her students became the positive-role models that Harriet Tubman teachers and students sought to emulate. Mrs. Gray's students were polite, poised, and articulate. They became fluent, crackerjack readers and writers, and their compositions filled the alcove near the entrance to their room. When this top class completed second grade with Mrs. Gray, their test scores were so high that Mr. Best was compelled to ask her to keep them for another year.

She was excited at the prospect of continuing to teach this class to whom she had become attached, and of which she was, of course, exceedingly proud; but she had misgivings for several reasons: (1) she believed two years were long enough for students to be with one teacher; (2) it had been a long time since she had taught third grade, having been on the first-second grade track for more than fifteen years; and (3) she thought she might better serve the school and community by taking another class of low-achieving first grade students (as was her custom) and bring them up to their potential. In the end, Mrs. Gray agreed to continue to teach this class through third grade.

Then, when the third year came to a close and the children realized they were going to another teacher for fourth grade, they appealed to Mrs. Gray to keep them for still another year. Their parents wrote letters to Mr. Best, requesting that their children remain in her room. It was unprecedented that a teacher at Harriet Tubman would have a class for four years. Others on the teaching staff were beginning to grumble about the fact that she had been given the enviable opportunity to teach a top class for three consecutive years. Mrs. Gray was again torn for the reasons she had felt the previous year, especially because she believed strongly that children should have the chance to grow with a variety of teachers --- And there were many good teachers at Harriet Tubman School.

Finally, Mrs. Gray succumbed to the pressures of Mr. Best, her students, and their parents and agreed to teach this class "one more year". I was able to observe this class in its fourth year with Mrs. Gray. Their writing achievement surpassed the average for students in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, one of the richest communities in the country; and surpassed that of the top fourth grade class at Harriet Tubman — (Mrs. Wingate's) in 1980 by .69 --- a difference which is significant at the .95 level. (See Table 2.)

Observations made in both Mrs. Wingate's and Mrs. Gray's classrooms over the two year period that I spent studying the school revealed that what happened in Mrs. Wingate's classroom was in striking contrast to what went on in Mrs. Gray's. Students in Mrs. Gray's class experienced a "planned program that continued uninterrupted throughout the day," while in Mrs. Wingate's class there were frequent lags in the academic program. The amount of time spent on both reading and writing instruction and practice was significantly higher in Mrs. Gray's classroom, where students' reading and writing were both competent, and sometimes superior. (See Table 2.)

Excerpts from extensive field notes taken the first time I observed this classroom in November, 1978 illustrate what it was like when Mrs. Gray taught this top group of students.

FIELD NOTES ON MRS. GRAY

November 27, 1978
9:10 A.M.

Among other items, these verses appear on the entrance to room 207:

MY AIM by Alexander Seymour

As I grow more and more each day
I'll try hard to live the friendly way.
I'll try hard to say and do
Only what is kind and true.

Always it shall be my aim
To play fair in any game.
Keep myself alert and cool.
Try to live the Golden Rule.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Do unto others as you would
have them do unto you.

It is a snowy day and Mr. Best is gathering all students in the auditorium. About ten of the children have come into room 207 so far. Mrs. Gray has left to go to the auditorium (and collect the rest of the class). Students already in the classroom are either working or talking quietly.

The walls are covered with things to read: North, South, East, West. Labelled shapes: circle, square, rectangle, triangle, octagon, ellipse. A map with words attached labelling bays, terrain, ocean, plains, lakes, etc. The words BLACK HISTORY and pictures of famous Blacks attached to blurbs on what they accomplished. Reading rules, poems, creative writing the students have done, tips on "What a Good Oral Reader Does." A large letter appears on one of the bulletin boards. It was written by Mrs. Gray to the class at the beginning of the year welcoming them back, telling about her summer vacation, and asking them to write letters to her in response. There is a rather large library of books Mrs. Gray has collected over the years.

Mrs. Gray arrives with some more of her students. No one talks now, she says: "We are ten minutes late. Who will be ready to lead us?" Students rush to hang up their coats and clear their desks.

"We're going to ask those who are late to come in quietly, hang up their coats, and join us when they're ready. Will you do that for us?"

Edward is chosen to be the leader. He stands erectly in front of the class and distinctly gives directions for the classroom assembly. With Edward's direction, the children pledge allegiance to the flag, sing the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and recite "My Aim" and The Golden Rule.

When they have completed their mass recitation Mrs. Gray asks, "Is there anyone who would like to comment on Edward as a leader? How did he conduct himself?"

A child softly offers some criticism which Mrs. Gray gently helps the child see is invalid.

Then another child says, "Edward was a very good leader this morning."

"Yes he was," says Mrs. Gray. "If you're going to be a good leader, you have to be something. Edward certainly was. Something that begins with a p."

"Proud?"

"Poised?"

"It begins with a blend. Say it in a sentence," says Mrs. Gray.

"Edward was prepared." One of the children has the correct answer.

"Yes, Edward was prepared."

Mrs. Gray goes on to say: "We have something new in our classroom this morning." She says she wants to introduce Miss Dabney and begins to tell them some of my background. She explains that I am someone they might want to be like because I am definitely qualified. She tells the students I have finished elementary school, junior high school, high school, college, and several more years of school. She says I am going as high as possible and she hopes some of them might do the same. Mrs. Gray tells the children I am studying Harriet Tubman because it is a successful school. She then tells them she certainly believes the children in room 207 are the best. The children agree.

Mrs. Gray says she is sure Miss Dabney would like to know who they are, too, so she gives out cards and has them make name tags The children are instructed to write with crayon.

"May I see your writing? I want Miss Dabney to see your handwriting," Mrs. Gray says, as she walks around, watching what the children are doing. "What kind of writing do we do in this room?" ("Cursive.") "Theresa, that's beautiful!... This little girl put her name on the bottom and Mrs. Gray said to put it in the ("middle").

When the children have finished making their name tags, Mrs. Gray asks "What about the news?"

"On Saturday I saw the(local football team)." Darryl says. Dana is asked to help him. After the name of the team is supplied, Darryl then reports in complete sentences that the local football team won but the local basketball team lost, and gives the score in each case.

"Is there more news?" Mrs. Gray asks.

Celeste is called on, stands, and tells about a trip to North Carolina and the treacherous ride home last night in the snow. Mrs. Gray asks the students to tell where in North Carolina Celeste usually goes. Many volunteer to answer and Jamal is called on to give the answer. He responds correctly and Mrs. Gray continues.

"I know exactly where North Carolina is. How many know where to find it on the map? Where would you say it is?"

"It is in the southeastern part of the United States," a child says.

Raymond has more news. He says that yesterday he used the typewriter and typed a story for Mrs. Golden. He says it's entitled "What If." He proceeds to read the story to the class:

what if

what if i were a movie star like cary grant or james cagney. i'd make millions of dollars. mabey even billions or trillions. mr. cary grant is in sespense movies. james cagney is in gangster movies. but there is one particular movie star that is in all the good movies this year. his name is burt rendylds. hes in stunt movies like white *lightning. if you like reading the fabulous funnies you will get* a kick out of broom hilda, nancy, moma, cathy, fred basset, funky winkerbean, and good old hagar the horrible. but if you really, really like racing you will like speed racer and the mack 5. look him up some time on channel 17. we play your favorites. but the only thing I want to be is myself, raymond.

author

raymond

grade 4

age 9 room 207

november 23, 1978

Raymond then reads a second selection he's written entitled "School Rules."

school rules

1. no fighting
2. no chewing gun or candy in school building
3. no running in halls
4. no walking in halls without permission
5. respect all teachers
6. keep all hands to self
7. raise hand when want something
8. go to bathroom or laboratory on lunch period and recess
9. no loud talking or any talking

room rules

1. no talking
2. when go to subject, respect that teacher
3. no talking back to teacher, your only hurting yourself
4. raise hand when want something
5. no calling out
6. no booing and ooing

and those are our rules.

When Raymond finishes reading, Mrs. Gray says he deserves an "extra special" and the children applaud.

"This is Raymond's second experience with a typewriter this size," says Mrs. Gray. "I'd like to put this up. But what do we have to do before we put it up?"

"Make corrections," says Raymond.

"What might we correct here?"

"But my typewriter doesn't have tall letters," volunteers Raymond.

"Well, I see - Very good, Raymond."

Another student with news says: "I also heard that 912 bodies were found in Guyana." She goes on to relate in three complete and clearly pronounced sentences what happened.

"In what town in Guyana did it happen?" asks Mrs. Gray.

"Jonestown," a student answers.

"Where is Guyana?" asks Mrs. Gray.

"I think Guyana is in Asia," says Tramel.

"You think. Let's hear from someone who knows," says Mrs. Gray.

"Guyana is in South America," offers Paulette.

"Yes, Guyana is in South America. What happened there was an awful think, but let's talk about it for a minute." Mrs. Gray calls attention to the map.

"You're doing 8th grade work now," she says after a student correctly locates South America.

"There are some people in this class who have something that would keep them from killing themselves because someone told them to. Lincoln said slavery shall be forever abolished in these United States." The children recite en mass a portion of the Emancipation Proclamation.

"If you watch Guyana, it certainly is something to think about that someone could get all those people to take their own lives," says Mrs. Gray.

"Following the leader may not always be fun," says Raymond. "There are good leaders and bad leaders."

"You have to use your own senses," says Allisa.

"Joseph," says Mrs. Gray, "describe where Guyana is. Is it near a body of water? Describe exactly what bodies of water it is near." He does.

They move on to Spelling now.

"Now let's see how you did your Spelling over the weekend. What elements were in the words we had?"

"Vowel digraphs, consonants digraphs, dipthongs, blends," the students offer.

The students proceed to take a quiz on the spelling words assigned. Mrs. Gray dictates each word, and puts it in a sentence often related to Guyana and other news children have shared. The sentence she gives for bottle is "What might happen to water in a bottle outside today?"

Sandra raises her hand and says Mrs. Gray forgot to dictate the bonus word. The bonus word is cornucopia.

"How many found out what it is?" asks Mrs. Gray (no response). What is the point of spelling a bonus word if you don't know what it means?"

"Cornucopia means horn of plenty," says Darryl.

"How many brought in their math homework?" asks Mrs. Gray. Most of the students raise their hands. "Better still," says Mrs. Gray, "How many did not bring in their math homework?" About five children raise their hands. One child, who just recently became a student in Mrs. Gray's classroom, says her homework was thrown away. Mrs. Gray asks why that never happens to the students in room 207.

"I don't do my homework all over," says one Allisa. "I do it in one place. I make sure it's in a safe place."

Getting ready to begin reading, now. Mrs. Gray writes the creative writing assignment on the chalkboard:

What If

What if you had heard on the radio or TV that there would not be school today. How would you spend the day?

"We do creative writing everyday," says Mrs. Gray. "There is no point in learning to spell if you don't use the words to write.

Raymond gave me the idea to name this "What If." She then goes on to say:

"The most important reading we will do is silent reading. Every direction has key words. Look for the key words in these directions and use them to understand what to do."

She tells Group A to begin working on the creative writing assignment and Group B to take out their workbooks. The children remain in their seats.

"Comprehension is something we seem to be having trouble with," says Mrs. Gray. She goes on to say to Group B: "This page is about prefixes. But you really need to work on understanding what you read." They go over the directions for the page together.

"Who would like to read sentence #1 and tell what the answer is? (A student responds correctly.) OK, now I want you to work independently." Mrs. Gray reviews with Group B their assignment: workbook pages, creative writing, and a ditto ("that's too easy, but kind of fun... because it's a snowy day")

Then she goes to Group A. They are working on the creative writing assignment. She looks at some of the students' work, then reminds them that capital letters begin on one line and stop on the other. Mrs. Gray motions to two boys and they begin distributing the reading books (Round The Corner, Bank Street; Selection: "A Little Riddle Play" pp 195-197, 270 pp in book). She begins talking about San Diego, then asks a student to find it on the map.

"If you went to San Diego, what would you see out in the bay?" ("battleships") "Right! There are hundreds of them out in the bay. San Diego is the third largest city in California... There are many Spanish people in San Diego because it is so close to Mexico... We used the legend on the map the other day to compare the size of Metropolis and San Diego. Is San Diego as large as Metropolis?"

"No," the students responds.

"But you broke my heart when you forgot how to recite "The City." says Mrs. Gray. "Why is it such an important poem?" A student says it was written by Langston Hughes, a famous Black poet.

Mrs. Gray has students look in the table of contents to locate the story they will read today.

"How do we turn pages? All these things are important in reading." She puts the word riddle on the chalkboard. "How many syllables are in this word?" A child responds correctly, then Mrs. Gray elicits the rule from the children.

"What skills do we have to unlock this word? (neck) We're doing this for you Kalida because you have trouble sounding out. OK, let's sound out: n e ck." The next word on the chalkboard is tongue. Mrs. Gray says this word doesn't follow the two vowels together rule; it's different. The students pronounce it. Mrs. Gray then asks Kalida where else you can find a tongue other than in your mouth. Kalida cannot think of another meaning for tongue. Another child "helps" her.

The students turn to "A Little Riddle Play."

"This is a play we may be able to act out. Read it silently." While the children read silently, Mrs. Gray writes some figurative phrases on the chalkboard. She then turns back to Group A and asks Kalida to name the characters in the play. Kalida responds correctly. Then Mrs. Gray asks for volunteers to play each part. Children take parts and read the play very smoothly. When the children have finished, Mrs. Gray says: "I think they deserve an 'extra special'." The children applaud. Then Mrs. Gray asks, "Who can do even better--read with even more expression?" More students take turns reading, giving almost all the students an opportunity to read aloud.

Mrs. Gray corrects the children's pronunciation of ask (children consistently prounounce it ax); she writes each letter of the word on the board and has students sound out a, as, ask. She says: "Think of it slowly so you won't be chopping off people's heads all the time." The children laugh.

Mrs. Gray has the students close their books and asks them some riddles from the teacher's manual. Some from the other group are listening and raising their hands to give the solution to the riddle. The children are very enthusiastic.

Mrs. Gray calls attention to what is written on the chalkboard:

in hot water
as pretty as a picture
as neat as a pin

a fine kettle of fish
in apple pie order
knee deep in trouble

"What have I written?" she asks. Hands go up.

"Phrases," answers a child who has been called.

"VERY good! They're not sentences; they're phrases." Mrs. Gray asks: "Roderick, will I ever be able to say your desk is as neat as a pin?" Rod shrugs his shoulders. (He looks displeased at the obvious criticism.) Mrs. Gray has children tell the meaning for each phrase.

"What are liquids?" Mrs. Gray asks.

"Objects that pour," answers Roderick.

"I like to talk to you! Liquids are objects that pour.... I left Miss Dabney in the room because I knew it was in "apple pie order".... If you fight in our school, you will be knee deep in trouble" are examples of sentences used to help the students understand each phrase.

When this lesson is over, Mrs. Gray says: "We will have indoor recess. Remember first impressions are lasting impressions." Mrs. Gray goes on to comment on the conduct of the class in the corridor passing to the restrooms. They are talking and running. She asks which phrases would apply to the class in the hall. The children respond with knee deep in trouble, a fine kettle of fish, in hot water.

"Can you go to the bathroom by yourselves? Remember, I'm a teacher, not a policeman," Mrs. Gray tells them, as they quietly line up and walk across the corridor to the restrooms.

During indoor recess Mrs. Gray continues to ask the class riddles. Many children from both groups volunteer to answer each one. Many from Group B are saying "ooh" and raising their hands.

Mrs. Gray spontaneously recites part of "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" to the class (as a take off from the riddle: What did Paul Revere say at the end of his ride? ("Whoa!")

"Now our recess is over -- unless someone has a joke," says Mrs. Gray. Allisa tells a joke. Rod also tells a joke. Then Mrs. Gray says: "We could go on forever with jokes. Maybe later this afternoon we will have some more." Then she goes on to say: "Do you remember our last assembly? Mrs. Morgan read a poem to us. (The children remember the incident, but not the poem's title.) "I know you won't remember the author, if you don't remember the title." She proceeds to read another poem to the class by the same author: "Snow in the City" by Rachel Field. Mrs. Gray reads the poem leaving out two words in the last line for the children to supply. She reads the poem again, this time the children supply the entire last line. She then reviews the vocabulary from the poem:

"When something is out of fashion, what does it mean?"

"What does it mean to dull the noise of traffic?

She then goes on to talk about the snow: "I wanted to stop and let you watch the snow come down. Every snowflake is different. Look around at your classmates. We're all different, too. Who is the architect who can make every snowflake and person different?"

"God," a child volunteers.

"Yes, I like to call him God, too. I believe there's someone greater than man..."

Mrs. Gray then asks who knows what they usually do now. Rod is the first to recall, so he gets to pass out a "fun" paper on classifying. The reading period continues.

Mrs. Gray goes back to Group B. They discuss Guyana in relation to something they have just read. Mrs. Gray asks: "What kind of airplane was used there?" .."What do we need planes for in war?" (A child responds: "To carry soldiers and equipment.") "What kind of equipment?" ("Guns, tanks, cannons..") Mrs. Gray: "Cannons?"

"If I had to go from Metropolis to Guyana, I wouldn't go in a helicopter that travels only 75 mph. What would I go in? ("You would go in a jet.")

"Excuse me. Leon is keeping you from learning," says Mrs. Gray after observing that Leon is talking to another child. "Leon, take your paper and sit over there... What would they need the helicopter for?" ("To search the jungle.") The story they just completed is about helicopters.

"I remember it said when a helicopter goes up," says Raymond, "it ascends, and when it goes down, it descends."

"Listen to that vocabulary!" says Mrs. Gray. "We won't have to say *up* and *down* all our lives...What's a cockpit? (No response.) Where am I from? ("Dayton, Ohio") What do you know about Dayton, Ohio?" ("Dayton is where the Wright Brothers built the first airplane.") Yes, and the word *cockpit* was in that story. What's a cockpit?" Raymond finally comes up with the answer to what a cockpit is.

"My problem with you is comprehension," says Mrs. Gray to the group. "You read the story about the Wright Brothers a month ago and can't remember what a cockpit is... You can read every word, but you must understand. After each line, think 'Now just what does that mean?' Let me know when you're ready."

The students read silently "Cockpit in the Clouds," a poem that appears on page 154 (out of 461) of *Roads to Everywhere*, Ginn Basic Readers, 1966, 100 Edition. While the students in Group B are reading the poem, Mrs. Gray writes vocabulary from the poem on the chalkboard:

spire
soar
droning
crystal
amidst
pierce
tantrums
narrow

Mrs. Gray commends one boy for using his dictionary while reading to look up an unknown word. She then puts up a poster with several scenes from New York City. The children recognize the city is New York, but believe the large building is the Empire State Building. Mrs. Gray tells them it is another building. The building has a *spire*.

"If you were 2000 feet above the city, how would everything look to you?" asks Mrs. Gray. Mrs. Golden, the reading teacher, comes in with a list of children who are to leave with her to get their prizes for selling candy. About 15 children get up to leave. While the children are gone, Mrs. Gray continues with Group B. A fire alarm rings. Mrs. Gray unexcitedly asks a child to look in the hall to see if anyone is out there. Then an announcement: "This is not a firedrill." Bells continue to ring for about a minute.

Mrs. Gray has the children read the poem orally -- line by line -- and explain its meaning. Another child is asked to read the first stanza of the poem. She stumbles (mispronounces words) several times. Mrs. Gray says the child will not be able to understand the meaning of the poem since she missed so many words. She then asks Jill to read. Jill reads with no errors and with expression. The first child who read now raises her hand and says the reason she missed so many words is that her mother thinks she needs glasses. Mrs. Gray tells the child she must decide whether to pass the child on her actual performance. It is her mother's responsibility to see that she gets glasses.

Robert reads aloud. Mrs. Gray says: "You're having trouble with contractions." She reviews the pronunciation of several -- students read each word as it's written on the chalkboard.

It's now time for lunch. Mrs. Gray takes most of the children downstairs to collect their free lunches. Four children remain in the classroom and take out the bag lunches they have bought from home. About ten minutes later, the children quietly return to the room with the lunches they have picked up in the cafeteria. Mrs. Gray has some business to take care of in the office and has sent the children back alone. She joins them in about ten minutes. While she is gone, the children eat their lunches and talk quietly.

When I talked to Mrs. Gray later, she offered: "I let them have lunch in the room with me. I don't think anyone else does this. In the cafeteria, they're not allowed to talk. I think they should be able to talk at lunchtime. I get to listen to how their speech is developing. They think they're getting a whole lot, but I'm observing... (I'm not giving up so much.")

She also tells me she gives them homework every night. The children help her mark it now (since she has 38 children). She says teaching is not always telling...she tries to be positive. She goes on to say:

"I don't know if you know, but I've had these children for four years. I was originally to have them two years, and at the end of the second year I prepared to send them on. But the test scores were high and I was asked to keep them for a third year. I did, and at the end of grade three, when they realized they were going to another teacher, the children asked me to keep them; their parents wrote letters. I told them with personalities...three years were enough. I would get a headache. The children said, 'Oh, Mrs. Gray, we won't give you a headache. We promise.' Now all I have to do when they start to misbehave is say, 'Now, don't give me a headache.'" She smiles.

She also offers: "This is a very competitive class. You know, Raymond caught it this morning because he shined so -- to bring a typed story to class! There is a group of girls who were very jealous. They picked on him. He complained to me as they were leaving for lunch. I said, 'Raymond, you know why they're picking on you.' Didn't you see?" I hadn't.

After lunch, Mrs. Gray dictates the homework assignment to the students. The students who are new to the classroom have trouble keeping up and Mrs. Gray suggests that they take the responsibility of getting a "buddy" to help them. Several of their classmates raise their hands to volunteer.

Then - the students have social studies. Mrs. Gray culminates the lesson by having the students copy and complete this outline.

Social Studies

1. The head of the Police Department is called the ________ ________.

2. Many people serve under him. They are
   (a)
   (b)
   (c)
   (d)
   (e)
   (f)

3. How can a person qualify to be a policeperson? (man changed to person later)

At 2:45 the class goes to Language Arts. They go upstairs to Mrs. Golden's room. Mrs. Gray leaves to go back to her room. The children are more restless in here. They giggle and talk among themselves. To quiet down the class, Mrs. Golden says: "I'm very pleased with the way Paulette is sitting." The children quiet down.

They have stories they have written previously. Each child has a folder. Mrs. Golden has written comments on each story. Stories she likes very much she has taken home to type. She asks for volunteers to read their stories. Several students read their stories, including Raymond who reads the story he shared with the class this morning.

"It's going to be very hard for me to decide which ones to type. They're all very, very good," says Mrs. Golden. (On the papers, she has corrected the grammar.)

She now writes saw, seen, and see on the chalkboard. She asks the children to give a sentence for each word. She asks what you are talking about when you use each word. Children review the concept that saw and seen are past tense and see is present tense.

"Seen and saw are used for past tense," says Mrs. Golden. "What's the difference between saw and seen?"

"Seen needs a helping word," say Paulette. "Seen means the past."

"See is when you are looking at it now," says Alicia. "See is also used for the future."

After discussion, Mrs. Golden tells the class to write five sentences for each word. She cautions them not to write first grade sentences because she will just tell them they are too smart to be writing that way. At the end of the period, she gives lollipops to the row that has been most cooperative all month. Then the children put on their coats and line up to go home.

* * * *

Notice that the bulk of the day in Mrs. Gray's classroom, with this group of high-achieving students is filled with activities that develop:

- oral composition skills,
- fluency in Standard American English,
- experiential background,
- vocabulary,
- written language,
- spelling, and
- reading skills.

In the afternoon, the language skills teacher also worked on writing skills and the acquisition of Standard American English. When students attended each of the five special classes once a week, a large part of their time was, again, spent reading and writing, albeit on a much more elementary level than they experienced in Mrs. Gray's classroom.

At the end of the 1978-79 school year, despite requests that the students remain in her classroom for still another year, the class that Mrs. Gray had taught for four years went on to another teacher.

Mrs. Gray's new assignment was a very low second-grade class that had experienced a particularly unproductive first year. This second-grade class presented Mrs. Gray with even more of a challenge than she had expected (or had even hoped for). It was much easier to begin at the beginning with a first-grade class, to start from scratch with them, than it was to begin with a class in second grade after they had experienced a turbulent first year with an assortment of inept teachers.

It was evident that Mrs. Gray was effective in teaching a top class to read and write well; her most recent success had made that apparent. I was intrigued at the prospect of continuing to observe her to see how she would go about teaching this group of "very low" second graders. How would she begin with them? Would she be effective?

The answer to the last question is affirmative. This class, which in first grade achieved one of the lowest percentile ranks on the California Achievement Test in Harriet Tubman history, scored above the national norm on the same standardized test at the end of the second grade. The bulk of these students were nonreaders when they entered second grade and were reading a second-grade-level book the end of the year.

Their writing achievement grew by leaps and bounds as well. There was no significant difference between their writing abilities and the mean score of writing samples taken from the middle-ability second-grade class at Harriet Tubman. (See Table 2.) It is also interesting to note that, although the difference is not statistically significant, their mean writing score exceeded the mean writing score for the low-ability second grade in 1979 by .23 points.

What follows illustrates what happened when Mrs. Gray taught this class of low-achieving second graders.

On an unseasonably warm, but rainy morning in February, 1980, Mrs. Gray, a small, dark-brown woman with a silver afro, leaves the rowhouse where she has lived for twenty-two years, and drives her battered, red, 1961 Chevrolet eleven blocks to the Harriet Tubman School.

She arrives at the school at 8:10 and begins preparing her classroom for the day's activities: removing an old cellophane bag full of peanuts from the supply closet, writing a note to remind the librarian that she wants her class to see the film on George Washington Carver this afternoon, marking comments on her students' compositions, and checking phonics workbooks.

LaTanya, one of her thirty-three students, drags in at 8:15 from the breakfast she had been having down in the gym, AKA cafeteria. She has a headache -- most likely, Mrs. Gray thinks, because she's "forgotten" her eye glasses once again. She gives LaTanya some sympathy, reminds her what the problem is, and advises her to relax and put her head down for awhile. If need be, she will send LaTanya to the nurse when she arrives, Mrs. Gray thinks, as she continues commenting on and marking her students' work.

LaTanya had an aversion to wearing her eye glasses. Mrs. Gray would often call to LaTanya's attention attractive children and adults who wore glasses, in an effort to make LaTanya less self-conscious (or recalcitrant) about wearing hers. But in the year I knew her, LaTanya never swallowed it; she was forever leaving her glasses inside her desk or at home. On being reminded to put them on, however, she always smiled with a twinkle in her eye and without hesitating, went to get them (if they weren't at home). She competed with Jamal as the class comedian, cracking clever jokes when the opportunity presented itself.

Mrs. Gray exhibited a great deal of patience with LaTanya, as she showed to others in her class who seemed to go out of their way to get attention. As she says, "Knowledge of child psychology is essential to a teacher." She combines strictness with sensitivity and affection.

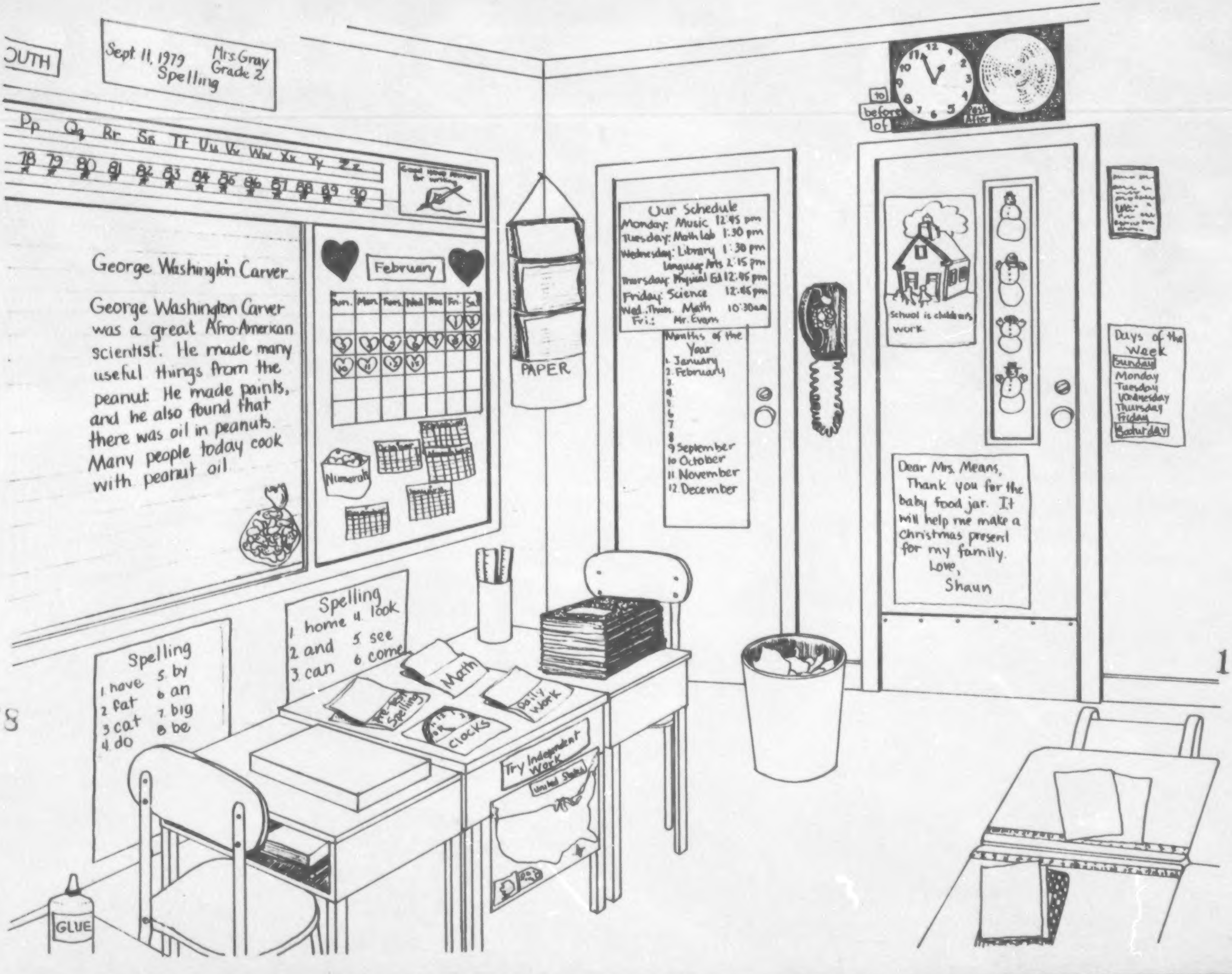
At 8:43, Mrs. Gray puts on her coat and fur hat, leaves LaTanya, and goes down two flights of stairs to the schoolyard to meet the rest of her class: thirty-two children that, I've been told, the other teachers shuddered at the prospect of having to teach.

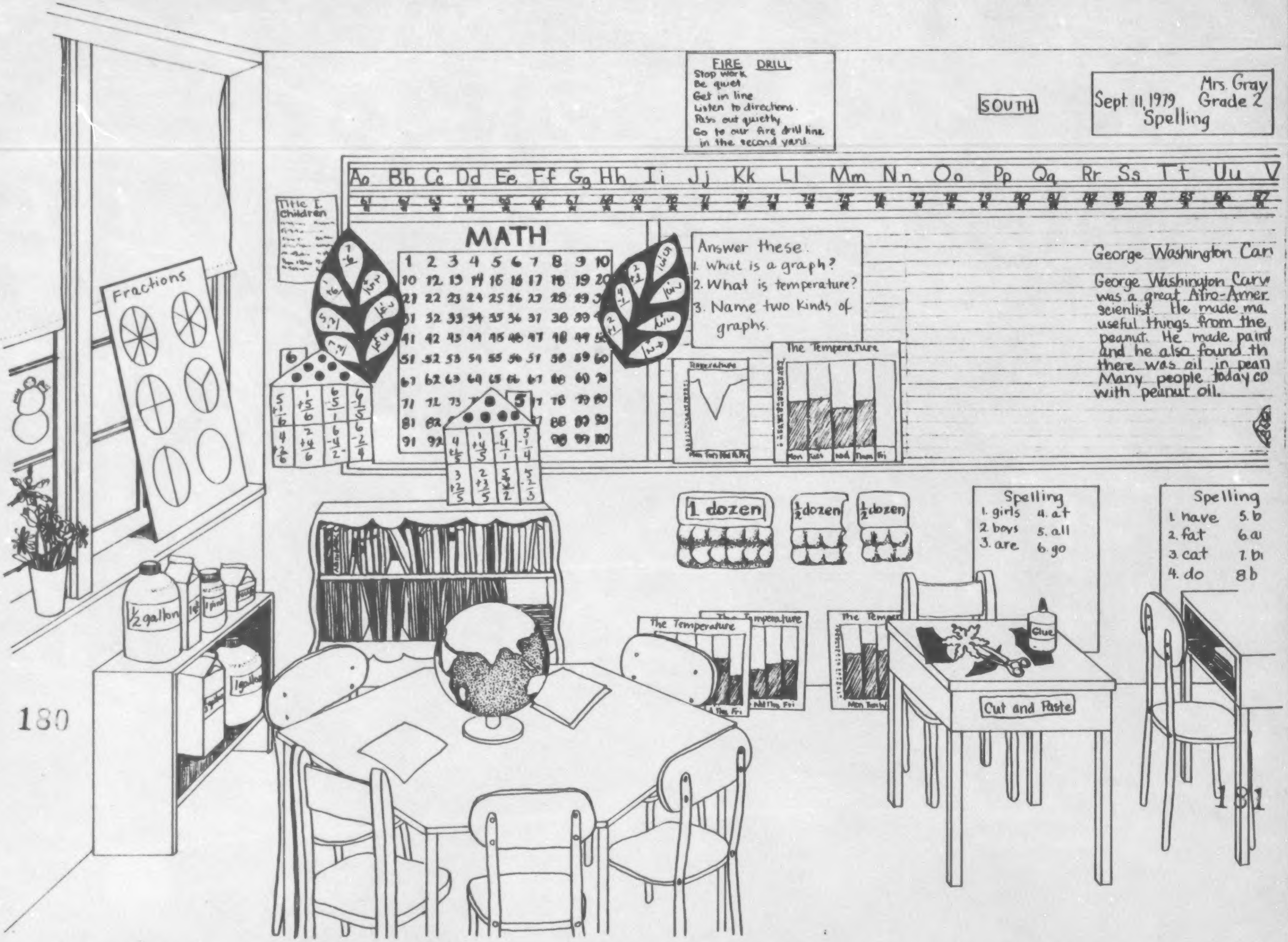
Outside in the huge, barren schoolyard, Harriet Tubman students scramble to get into their respective lines. Mr. Best and his administrative assistant, Mr. Sloan, take notes, then compare them to decide which classes will win the flags awarded for assembling promptly and orderly. To win a flag, all of the members of a class who are present that day must come to school on time and be among the first who are orderly lined up after the bell rings. Classes are to line up in the schoolyard each day at 8:45 and 12:45. Flags are awarded about three times a week; students and teachers never know when it will happen.

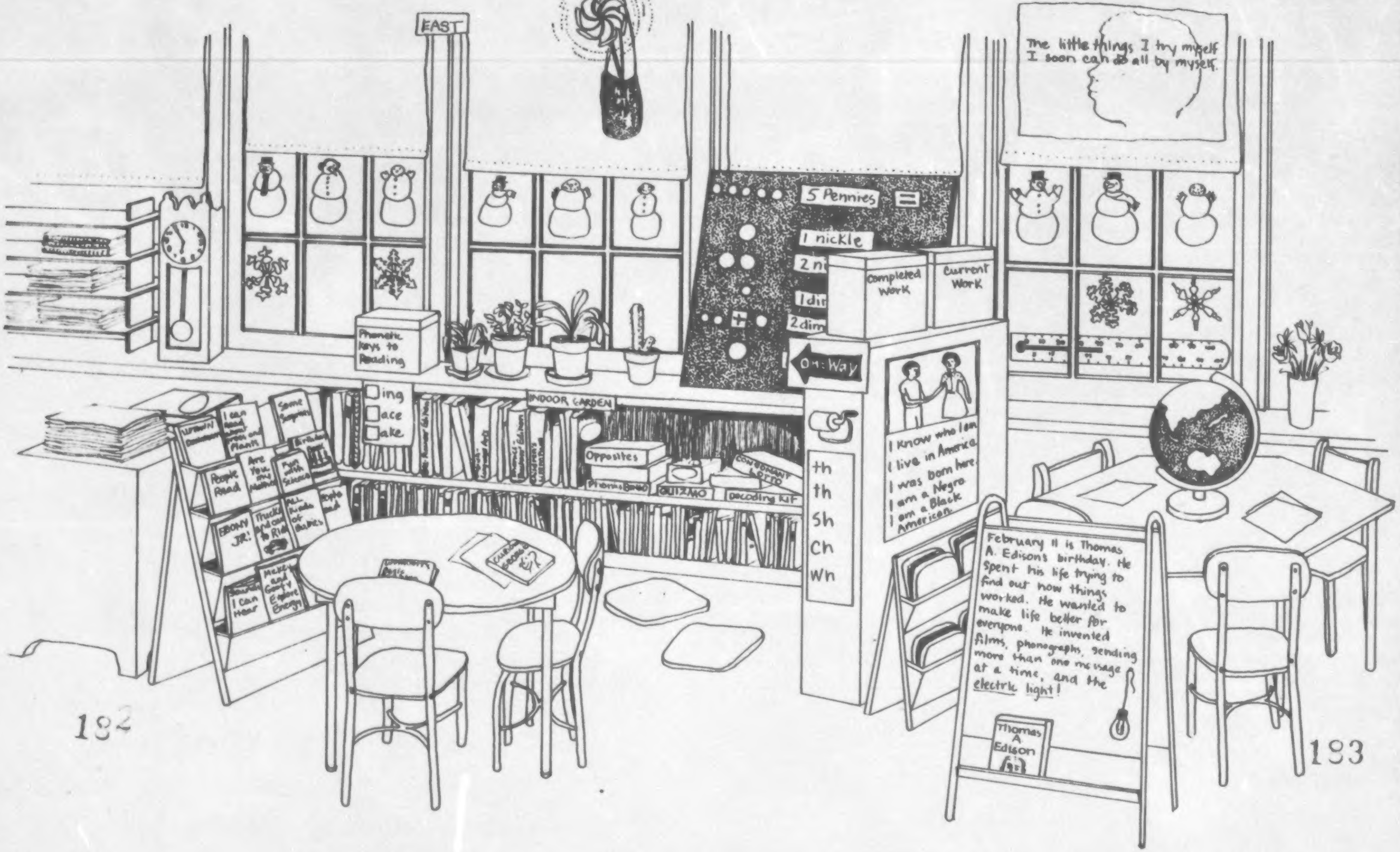
"The surprise element helps everyone do their jobs consistently," says Mr. Best. "Students arrive on time, and teachers have to arrive on time to meet their classes." Classes that win go into the school first, proudly waving the flag in front of them. The winning classes display the flag in their rooms throughout the day, then return them to the office. Competition for the flags is fierce and three minutes after the bell rings, the schoolyard is quiet and most classes are standing in line, "straight and tall."

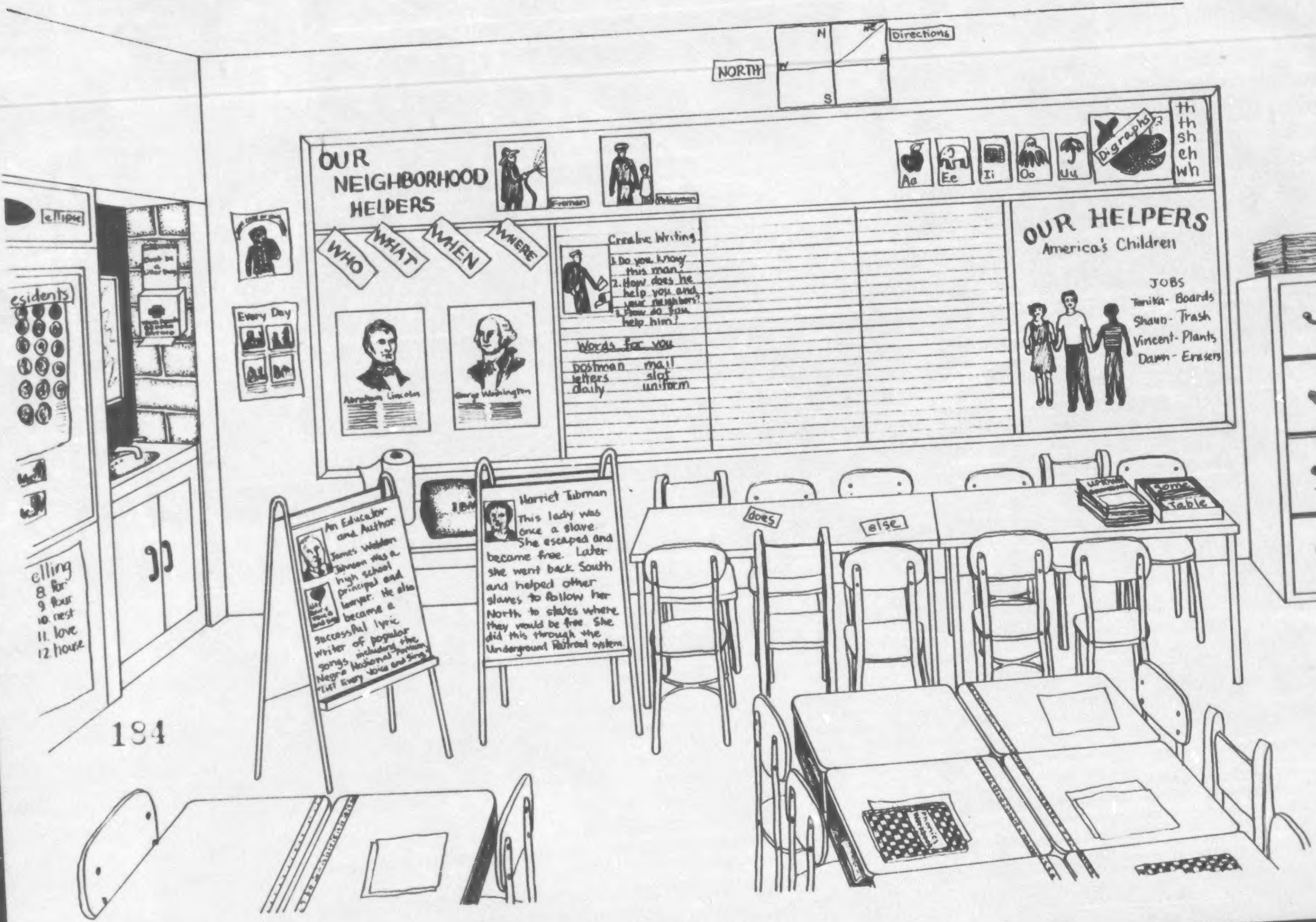
Mrs. Gray's class is standing proudly when she opens the door to the schoolyard. She stands in front of them and waits as Mr. Best awards the flags. A muffled groan ripples through the class, and Mrs. Gray realizes they will not win a flag today as she squints across the schoolyard and sees one of her students racing towards them. Shawn, late and breathing heavily, sheepishly approaches the line.

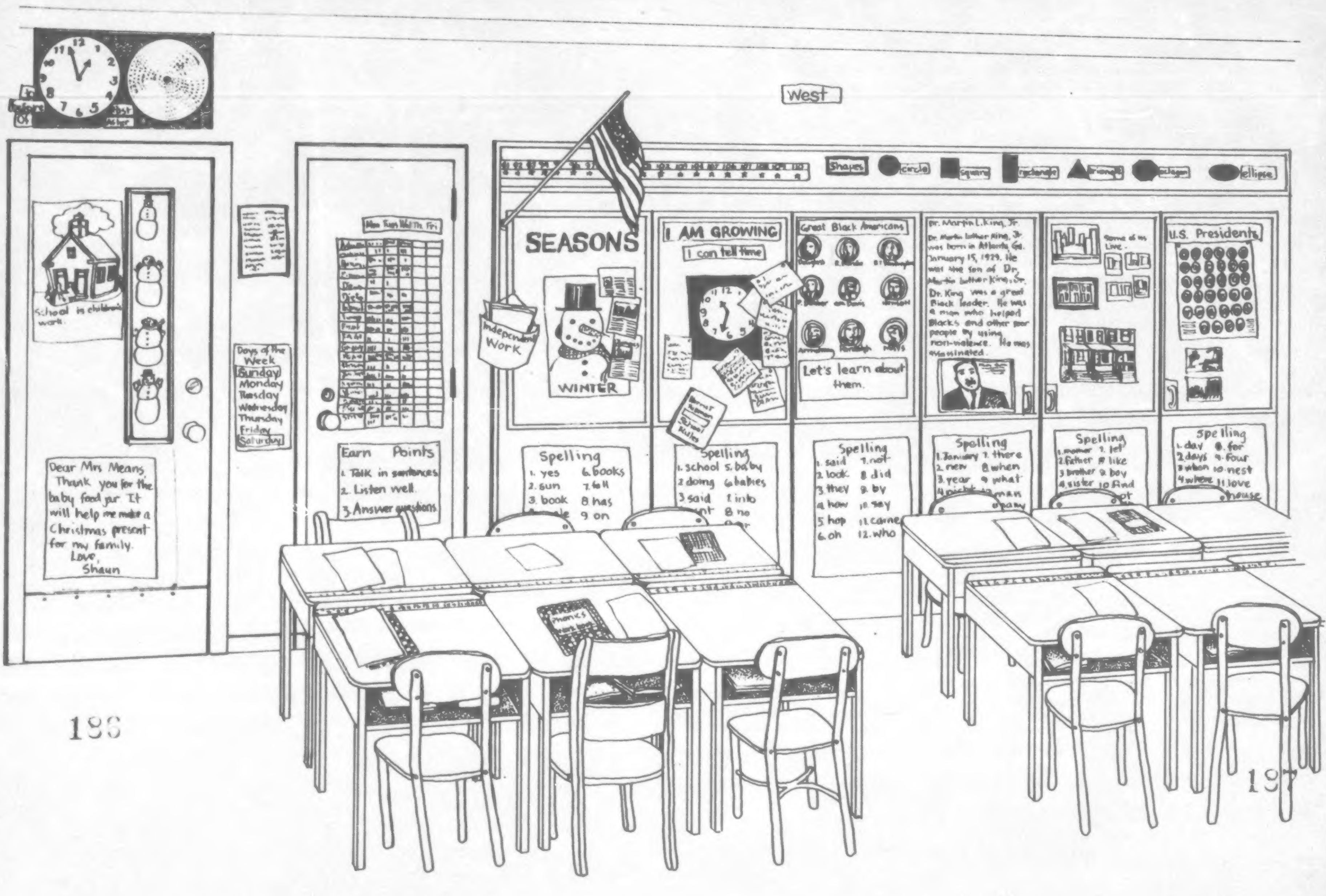
"These things happen," Mrs. Gray consoles him, putting her arm around him. "But you must try to come on time," she gently scolds. These words seem to ease their distress at having lost and the children nod as Shawn takes his place at the front of the line. He and Tinika, the shortest male and female members of the class, lead the two lines up the stairwell and through the corridor to room 207.


OUTH
Sept. 11, 1979
Mrs. Gray Grade 2
Spelling
Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90
George Washington Carver
George Washington Carver was a great Afro-American scientist. He made many useful things from the peanut. He made paints, and he also found that there was oil in peanuts. Many people today cook with peanut oil.
February
Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thu. Fri. Sat.
Numerals
PAPER
Our Schedule
Monday: Music 12:45 pm
Tuesday: Math Lab 1:30 pm
Wednesday: Library 1:30 pm
Language Arts 2:15 pm
Thursday: Physical Ed 12:45 pm
Friday: Science 12:45 pm
Wed.-Thurs. Math 10:30 am
Fri.: Mr. Evans
Months of the Year
1. January
2. February
9 September
10 October
11 November
12 December
10
before
of
After
School is children's work
Dear Mrs. Means,
Thank you for the baby food jar. It will help me make a Christmas present for my family.
Love,
Shaun
Days of the Week
Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Spelling
1 have 5 by
2 fat 6 an
3 cat 7 big
4 do 8 be
Spelling
1 home 4 look
2 and 5 see
3 can 6 come
Math
Pre-test Spelling
clocks
Daily Work
Try Independent Work
United States
GLUE


FIRE DRILL
Stop work.
Be quiet
Get in line
Listen to directions.
Pass out quietly.
Go to our fire drill line in the second yard.
SOUTH
Sept. 11, 1979
Mrs. Gray
Grade 2
Spelling
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu V
Title I Children
Fractions
MATH
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Answer these.
1. What is a graph?
2. What is temperature?
3. Name two kinds of graphs.
Temperature
The Temperature
Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri
George Washington Carv
George Washington Carv was a great Afro-Amer scientist. He made ma useful things from the peanut. He made paint and he also found th there was oil in pean Many people today co with peanut oil.
1 dozen
½ dozen
½ dozen
Spelling
1. girls
2. boys
3. are
4. at
5. all
6. go
Spelling
1. have
2. fat
3. cat
4. do
5. b
6. a
7. b
8. b
½ gallon
1 pint
1 gallon
The Temperature
Glue
Cut and Paste


EAST
The little things I try myself
I soon can do all by myself.
5 Pennies
=
1 nickle
2 ni
1 di
2 dim
+
On: Way
Completed Work
Current Work
Phonetic Keys to Reading
☐ ing
☐ ace
☐ ake
INDOOR GARDEN
Opposites
Phonics Bingo
QUIZMO
CONSONANT LOTTO
Decoding Kit
th
th
Sh
Ch
Wh
I know who I am
I live in America
I was born here.
I am a Negro
I am a Black American.
Some Surprises
I can Read about Trees and Plants
People Read
Are You My Mother
Fun with Science
EBONY JR!
Trucks and cars to Ride
All Kinds of Babies
I Can Hear
Mexe and Goofy Explore Energy
February 11 is Thomas A. Edison's birthday. He spent his life trying to find out how things worked. He wanted to make life better for everyone. He invented films, phonographs, sending more than one message at a time, and the electric light!
Thomas A Edison

N
S
W
E
NORTH
Directions
OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HELPERS
Fireman
Policeman
Aa
Ee
Ii
Oo
Uu
Digraphs
th
th
sh
ch
wh
WHO
WHAT
WHEN
WHERE
Abraham Lincoln
George Washington
Creative Writing
1. Do you know this man?
2. How does he help you and your neighbors?
3. How do you help him?
Words for you
postman mail
letters slot
daily uniform
OUR HELPERS
America's Children
JOBS
Tanika - Boards
Shaun - Trash
Vincent - Plants
Dawn - Erasers
Every Day
ellipse
esidents
elling
8. for
9. four
10. nest
11. love
12. house
An Educator and Author
James Weldon Johnson was a high school principal and lawyer. He also became a successful lyric writer of popular songs including the Negro National Anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing."
Harriet Tubman
This lady was once a slave. She escaped and became free. Later she went back South and helped other slaves to follow her North to states where they would be free. She did this through the Underground Railroad system.
IBM
does
else
some
table


West
Shapes
circle
square
rectangle
triangle
octagon
ellipse
School is children's work.
Days of the Week
Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Mon Tues Wed Th. Fri
Dear Mrs Means,
Thank you for the baby food jar. It will help me make a Christmas present for my family.
Love,
Shaun
Earn Points
1. Talk in sentences.
2. Listen well.
3. Answer questions.
Independent Work
SEASONS
WINTER
I AM GROWING
I can tell time
Great Black Americans
Let's learn about them.
Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Ga. January 15, 1929. He was the son of Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. Dr. King was a great Black leader. He was a man who helped Blacks and other poor people by using non-violence. He was assassinated.
Some of us Live -
U.S. Presidents
Spelling
1. yes 6. books
2. sun 7. fell
3. book 8. has
9. on
Spelling
1. school 5. baby
2. doing 6. babies
3. said 7. into
8. no
Spelling
1. said 7. not
2. look 8. did
3. they 9. by
4. how 10. say
5. hop 11. came
6. oh 12. who
Spelling
1. January 7. there
2. new 8. when
3. year 9. what
man
many
Spelling
1. mother 7. let
2. father 8. like
3. brother 9. boy
4. sister 10. find
Spelling
1. day 8. for
2. days 9. four
3. when 10. nest
4. where 11. love
house
Phonics

Following what has become an established routine, the children quietly put down their bookbags, wait for the closet-door helpers to open the doors, put away their coats and hats, then stack their homework books on a table at the front of the classroom. Settled in, they take out their checkered phonics workbooks and begin doing the current assignment. Today they are working on a follow-up activity on long-vowel spelling patterns, e.g. ai (rain, pain, Spain) a-e (cake), and ay (ray).

While this is going on, Frederick comes over to ask Mrs. Gray if he can record the weather, Mrs. Gray tells him, "Yes. Whoever asks first may do it." He goes over to look through the window at the huge thermometer that is leaning outside the window on the graystone sill. The thermometer says 46 degrees. Frederick knows, but wants verification, since it is an odd sort of number---neither 45 nor 50. "Is it 46 degrees?" he asks me, probably because I am the only person near the thermometer. (I'm amazed that it is so warm.) I look to check, but I have trouble reading this huge thermometer.

"You have to look at where the mercury is," Frederick tells me, pointing. It clearly measures 46 degrees, and with some more reassurance that he is doing it right, Frederick colors in the bar graph for Wednesday---next to Monday and Tuesday, which his classmates filled in previously.

Dawn walks over to Mrs. Gray, who is beginning to look at the homework books the children have stacked neatly on her small table in front of the classroom. She wants to add today's date to the large calendar on one of the front bulletin boards. Permission granted, she takes a red paper heart from the pocket labelled "numerals" that's attached to the bulletin board. She prints the number "13" on it with black magic marker, and uses a thumb tack to attach it to the calendar next to the 12 and under "Thursday." Neatly thumb-tacked to the bulletin board are calendars for the months that have passed so far this year: September, October, November, December, January.

In addition to the ritual of turning in their homework books first thing in the morning, the students mark the current date on the individual calendars Mrs. Gray has duplicated for them and which they keep in their desks. This fixation on calendars is to help the children understand and master their use.

Mrs. Gray calls Victor and Beth over to the large round table at the front of the room to work with her in editing their compositions. Theirs were the best of the compositions her class wrote yesterday and she wants to display them.

This is what Victor wrote:

If I Were a Kite

> If I was a kite I'll fly in the sky. If I was in the sky I go whichever way the breeze blows. If I were a kite I'll fly. I'll blow faraway.

After he worked with Mrs. Gray in editing it, it looked like this:

If I Were a Kite

> If I were a kite, I'd fly in the sky. If I were in the sky, I'd go whichever way the breeze blows. If I were a kite, I'd fly. I'd blow faraway.

Compositions that are routinely displayed are always first "proofread" by the student and Mrs. Gray.

The children in Mrs. Gray's class frankly admit that they "played" all last year. They were some of the more severe casualties of the "forced transfer" of teachers which occured in 1978 in the Metropolis School District. Harriet Tubman had one of the most predominantly Black teaching staffs in the Metropolis School District until 1978 and a staff that had accrued a large amount of seniority. Teachers with the least amount of seniority were most susceptible to being transferred and received letters over the summer telling them where they were to report in September. Seven White teachers were transferred into the Harriet Tubman School, and seven Black teachers were transferred out to schools that had predominantly White teaching staffs. In every case, the White teachers who came to Harriet Tubman in September had less seniority than the Black teachers who had been forced to leave.

In December, the desegregation edict was mysteriously reversed and the same teachers were given the option to return or stay in their new schools. Five of the seven White teachers elected to remain at Harriet Tubman and five of the Black teachers were unable to return even though they had more seniority. There was an undercurrent of ill feeling for some time over this, what some called, "bending of the rules."

In spite of the tense circumstances surrounding their becoming permanent members of the staff, three of the five White teachers who opted to remain at Harriet Tubman following their "forced transfer" assimilated easily into the school. Good teaching seems to be respected above all else, and these teachers, like the vast majority of the Harriet Tubman staff, are structured, no-nonsense teachers, who challenge their students, expect excellence, and get results.

Unfortunately, the new White teacher Mrs. Gray's class had in the first grade was not of this ilk. She could not "adjust" to her charges. They did not take her seriously and "played" all day. She became "ill" and was absent often; thus her class was subjected to one substitute teacher after another. And they played. And they quickly learned to terrorize one substitute teacher after another.

According to their standardized test scores, 76% of their counterparts across the nation were able to read better than they could by the time they came to Mrs. Gray for second grade. Moreover, they were unruly.

Mrs. Gray began the year by letting the children know what she expected of them and by finding out what they expected of her. She had a headstart on most teachers since her reputation preceded her. Members of the Harriet Tubman community invariably spoke of her with respect. Children who were assigned to Mrs. Gray's classroom heard stories about Mrs. Gray whenever they responded to someone who inquired who their teacher would be in September. All summer long siblings or parents of the children who were to enter Mrs. Gray's classroom in September told them what they could expect of her: that she was strict and would give them a lot of work to do. Many of the older children remembered affectionately how much they had learned in her classroom. Mrs. Gray's students could always read and write better than students in other classes. In the same conversation, they would laugh about the good times they expected to have fooling around in another teacher's classroom---a teacher who had a reputation for allowing too much freedom or for giving them little to do.

The students who were to enter Mrs. Gray's classroom in September had very definite expectations of her, and she matched their expectations exactly.

The first day of school was filled with getting the children acclimated to their new surroundings: establishing where the classroom was located relative to the bathroom, schoolyard, office, exits; and then reviewing how they would line up each day: girls in one line, boys in another, from shortest to tallest, because, as Mrs. Gray says, "this is the most efficient way for everyone to see the teacher and follow directions." Mrs. Gray never failed to explain to the children the rationale behind every step they were taking.

The first day of school, children were encouraged to sit where they liked. A few days later, when seats were more permanently assigned (a bogus term in Mrs. Gray's classroom since she is constantly evaluating how things are going and redesigning the curriculum and classroom environment as she sees the need), it was on the basis of choice and efficiency. Children could sit where they wanted, but a tall child, for example, would not be allowed to sit in a seat that would block a shorter child's view of the chalkboard; and two children who talked to each other constantly or couldn't get along would not be permitted to sit together. Mrs. Gray would ask the children why she might have these caveats, and they would tell her. They knew; they were pretty logical themselves.

During the first week, Mrs. Gray discussed school with her children and what they hoped to accomplish. "What are some of the things you expect Mrs. Gray to help you with?" she asked them. She always uses the word "help."

They told her they wanted her to help them learn to read and write.

Mrs. Gray asked them, "What did you do last year?"

They said, frankly, "We played."

"All year long?" she asked them.

"Yes," they said.

She confessed to them that when she passed their classroom last year, she did hear quite a bit of noise, and that those times when she looked inside, she noticed they weren't reading books and doing those things they said they wanted to do. They talked about why they had played so much in first grade, and they agreed it was because they'd had a series of substitute teachers which gave them the feeling that no teacher was going to stay long and follow up on what she was doing.

"I know you didn't play all year," Mrs. Gray told them, and proceeded to find out what they had learned. Among other evaluations, she administered to the children the Metropolis School District's Informal Reading Inventories, which were composed of selections of the Bank Street Readers; and the Botel Phonics Inventory. These evaluations told her that the children had been pretty honest in their appraisal of the work they had done last year: they were nonreaders, for the most part.

Beginning by saying that she was a very honest teacher, Mrs. Gray gave her students the bad news. She told them that she was going to

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help them learn as much as they could, but that she believed in reminding them where they were along the scale relative to most second graders. She let them know that "right along the scale" they were very far back in first grade, but had been promoted to second.

She showed them the books they would have to master to reach the second-grade level, and told them she was willing to go "as fast as they could take it." If they really wanted to read, she told them, she was going to teach them all they needed to learn to read well.

She asked them if they wanted to do that, and the children nodded in affirmation. Then she asked them how they could go about learning all the things they never got to in first grade, and also go on to master their second grade work.

"We cannot play," they suggested. They discussed when they could play: in gym, at recess, after lunch, after school, and in school for the purpose of helping them reach their goal.

They established the rules and kind of schedule they would need to follow to make the most efficient use of their time. What they came up with is reflected in Mrs. Gray's instructions to the substitute teacher (for the rare occasions when she is absent):

Harriet Tubman School
General Directions to Substitute Teachers

1. *Check attendance carefully each session and record on teacher's monthly report sheet and the individual roll sheets.*
2. *Follow the teacher's program, including post of duty, unless oficially advised to do otherwise.*
3. *Use all supplies wisely and as directed by the teacher. Only assigned children are to handle materials.*
4. *Do not remove from the room any equipment, supplies, or teacher's personal belongings without permission.*
5. *Return keys to the office before you leave for the day.*
6. *If you have any question or a problem consult the Administrative Assistant, Mr. Sloan in room 216.*

September 10, 1979

To: The Substitute Teacher for Room 207

From: Mildred Gray

Welcome to room 207, grade 2. You should find the children growing in self-discipline and the willingness to learn through a planned program that moves uninterrupted throughout the day. Positive encouragement, such as "We will do each activity the right way," or "You can do it," will help.

The point system encourages the children to try harder.

Our guidelines are:

1. Coming to school is children's work.
2. The little things I try myself I soon can do all by myself.

Have a good stay!

The children in room 207 are encouraged to work for points by:

1. Talking in sentences.
2. Obeying rules.
3. Showing self-discipline in the classroom.
4. Completing work assigned.
5. Answering questions. This requires good listening skills, good thinking, recall, and knowledge about what is being asked.

Daily tally marks are made to be counted at the end of the day to see how we are growing.

Helpers

There are classroom helpers. See the bulletin board in the rear of the classroom to note pupil assignments.

Our Schedule

At the ringing of the school bell (8:45 A.M.) children will form lines in the school yard. They are to be escorted into the room by the teacher.

8:50 - 9:10	Phonics
9:10 - 9:20	Classroom Assembly: choose pupil leader
9:20 - 9:30	Spelling activities: see room chart

Students receive assignments to be completed independently.

9:30 - 10:15	*Reading instruction: three groups
10:15 - 10:30	Recess: teacher is to take children to the schoolyard and also pick them up.
10:30 - 10:55	Reading continues
12:00 - 12:45	Lunch: children receive lunch tickets located on the shelf in the teacher's closet. They are to be escorted to the lunchroom (in the gymnasium) by the teacher.
12:45 - 1:00	Teacher is to bring children into the classroom from the schoolyard unless it is a special subject time. (See schedule of special classes on chart on teacher's closet.) If it is a special subject time, special subject teacher will then pick up the children from the schoolyard.
1:00 - 1:10	Copy homework assignments. Children are to receive homework everyday.
1:10 - 2:00	Mathematics Instruction: review any math lesson found in lesson plan book.
2:00 - 2:15	Indoor recess: teacher is to take the children to and from the bathroom across the hall. First girls, then boys. Teacher must escort children.
2:15 - 2:45	Social Studies: Children may discuss with teacher Neighborhood Helpers 1. Describe who they are. 2. How they help us. 3. How we can help them.

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*Children will move to the long narrow reading table in the back of the room when their groups are called. The teacher's guide and my lesson plan will help with the directed reading activity.

2:45 - 2:55	STORYTIME: Read them a good one!
3:00	Dismissal: Teacher is to escort children to the schoolyard.

* * * *

At about 9:10, the children in Mrs. Gray's class review the phonics activity that they have completed independently. Mrs. Gray had told her students (and reminds them from time-to-time) that the skills that are reinforced and reviewed in their checkered phonics workbooks are skills they should have mastered in first grade---and would have mastered if they had not undergone such a chaotic year.

Today they are continuing their work on reviewing two-letter combinations that stand for the long a sound: ai and a_e. For each item on the workbook page, the children were to select from three words the word that makes the most sense in the sentence. Through these activities, Mrs. Gray helps her students decode and comprehend words like wade, lake, gate, and sail.

cake	Gail will bake a ________.	rake cake sake
lake	Kate will wade in the _____.	lake pale late
box	Dad laid a nail on a ______.	bun fox box
cape	Mom made Jane a red ______.	cap cape pane
ape	Dave gave his cap to an ___.	ate ale ape.
sail	Dale will tape the rip in the _____.	less sell sail

"Not lack," Mrs. Gray corrects Johnny.

"Lake," he corrects himself.

"Lake," Mrs. Gray repeats, perched on a desk top in the midst of the children. "What does the e tell us?"

"That the vowel will be long," Johnny answers.

"Yes. The e tells us the vowel will be long," Mrs. Gray repeats, turning to the entire class to reinforce the correct answer.

"Now that we know what wade means (she had helped them understand its meaning yesterday, in a previous phonics lesson on long a, by reminding them of the song "Wade in the Water," that was familiar to all of them), we know that Kate could only wade in a lake, (not lack, or pale, or late.)

"What is a lake?" she asks them. Many students raise their hands. She points to Dawn.

"A lake is a little body of water."

Mrs. Gray tilts her head and lifts her eyebrows. She points to another student whose hand went up after hearing Dawn's answer.

"A lake is a small body of water," Selma answers. Without saying a word, Mrs. Gray points to a third student to answer.

"A lake is a body of water," says Clifton.

"A lake is a body of water," Mrs. Gray repeats, recording three points on her paper. "Now, some people said 'little body of water' and some people said 'small body of water.' Think about what you have learned. What do we call a 'little body of water?' Mrs. Gray asks, reviewing a concept introduced previously. Students raise their hands.

"A pond," one of the volunteers answers.

"Talk so the class can hear you," Mrs. Gray tells him.

"Pond," Lawrence repeats, more loudly.

"A pond is a little body of water," Mrs. Gray repeats, extending Lawrence's answer into a complete sentence and recording two parts. "A lake is a bigger body of water. Very good. But let's not forget our sentences.

"Now, let's see if we can do the next one. Who's ready with the next one?" About ten hands go up. "April?" Mrs. Gray calls on one of the volunteers whose hand is raised, "Come on, let's go." She urges students to respond quickly.

"Dad laid a nail on a box," April reads smoothly.

"Yes," Mrs. Gray responds enthusiastically, then "walks through" part of the sentence with them: "'Dad' and the next word begins with

1-1-1-1; and I see two vowels next to each other and I quickly remember the rule --- 'laid.' Very good!" She records three points next to April's name.

"Next one, let's go!" Hands go up. "James? Nice and loud," Mrs. Gray says, looking at him.

"Mom made ---" James begins, then is unsure whether to pronounce J-a-n-e 'Jan' or "Jane'.

"Now, what is that vowel sound?" Mrs. Gray asks James, trying to help. "Look at the e," she tells him.

"Jane!" James answers, excited. The light comes on. "Mom made Jane a red cape." He proudly reads the sentence.

"Very good," Mrs. Gray records three points for James. "Next one. Be aware of vowel sounds." About eight students raise their hands. "Ellis?"

"'Dave gave his cap to an ape.'"

"'An ape'" repeats Mrs. Gray as she records three points for Ellis. Then she reviews why an and not a is used before the word ape.

Children who have trouble with this phonics activity are told to join the "Sounding Group" which meets for about ten minutes at the beginning of each reading period. Mrs. Gray believes students should assume a certain amount of responsibility for their own learning, so she encourages students to voluntarily join the "Sounding Group" if they feel the need for additional review.

Comment

Notice that while helping students master these basic decoding skills, Mrs. Gray seizes the opportunity to develop vocabulary and oral language skills. She also keeps the lesson moving at a rapid pace in an effort to assure that a lot gets done. She reinforces correct answers by repeating them. In addition, she stays in close proximity to the children, moving among them, sometimes peering over their shoulders.

It is interesting to note here, too, that every successful school reported in the literature emphasizes phonics. It is striking that in Mrs. Gray's classroom, phonics comes first.

Immediately following this review of the beginning-of-the-day phonics activity, classroom assembly begins. Mrs. Gray signals the beginning of this by asking for a student to volunteer to lead them. This volunteer directs the class in pledging allegiance to the flag, singing "Lift E'vry Voice and Sing," which Mrs. Gray has recently taught them in honor of Black History Week, then sharing, or asking for another student to share, one of the many inspiring quotations Mrs. Gray has gradually introduced into their repertoire since the school year began.

"The earth is so full of a number of things,/I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings!" a volunteer recites today.

"Who has something of interest to share with us today?" Mrs. Gray then asks her children, signalling that it is time for them to summarize a new event they became aware of overnight. She has encouraged her students to watch the news and ask their parents about current events so they will be able to participate during this sharing. Volunteers stand, one-by-one, and speak clearly, neatly summarizing and using complete sentences. Mrs. Gray seizes the opportunity to elaborate on concepts touched on in these recitations, explaining, by bringing forward a globe of the world, where Afghanistan, Africa, and Russia are relative to the United States; explaining what a boycott is; explaining what and where the Winter Olympics are; displaying artificial flowers to help them begin to understand the concept of artificial snow.

With this sharing, Mrs. Gray broadens the experiential backgrounds of her students, extends their vocabularies and develops their oral composition skills. She also introduces and reinforces concepts of history, politics and geography. Students receive points for participating in any portion of the classroom assembly. This is Mrs. Gray's way of providing positive reinforcement for speaking clearly and in sentences, exhibiting poise, remembering verses and quotations, listening well, exhibiting critical thinking skills, and showing the motivation to participate. Through consistent modelling on Mrs. Gray's part, and positive reinforcement, the children have steadily grown in their abilities to summarize their thoughts in Standard American English. While classroom assembly is going on, the voice of Mr. Best comes across the public address system with this announcement:

"Seventh and eight graders are not allowed to come across the second floor." (The junior high is housed in the third floor of the new building; there is no reason for seventh and eight graders to be on the second floor except to pass through enroute to the cafeteria or schoolyard.) "If you see any seventh and eighth graders on the second floor, bring them into your classroom and call the office. No students are to be in the halls unescorted. Any unescorted child I see today will be suspended!"

Mrs. Gray reviews what Mr. Best said: "Unescorted means without the teacher," she explains. "Sometimes I let one or two of you go to the bathroom without me or Mrs. Jones, but it is right across the hall and I know who and how long. If you go through the halls unescorted and Mr. Best sees you, I can't help you. You'll be suspended," she reiterates Mr. Best's warning.

Mrs. Gray has taken advantage of Black History Week to accelerate her efforts to help her students learn about "Great Black Americans who helped to make our country great." Towards the end of the sharing, she holds up a large cellophane bag full of peanuts and asks the students to identify it.

"Now I have promised that we will be learning about many great Black Americans this week. Today, I'm going to help you learn about another great Black American who was a very curious scientist. He found many different, useful things we could do with these," she says, holding up the bag of peanuts. She has the students locate on the bulletin board the picture of the great Black American she must be talking about. A volunteer locates the picture of George Washington Carver holding a peanut, but is unable to read his name. Mrs. Gray records three points for the volunteer's having accomplished this much, then calls on another student to decode Carver's name.

"G-uh...J-uh...George Wash..ing..ton... George Washington!"

"Yes, George Washington ---," Mrs. Gray says, as she prints the name on the chalkboard. "Anyone want to read his last name?" she asks, as she prints: Carver. All around me I hear students sounding out: "Cuh..ar...Car-ver, Carver...Carver!" Hands go up in the air. "O-o-o-h! Carver!" several students whisper loudly.

"A quiet person may read his name for us," cautions Mrs. Gray. "Shawn?" Shawn does not respond; he was quiet, evidently, because he was not paying attention; both Mrs. Gray and I know decoding comes easily to him. "Not ready," says Mrs. Gray tersely, turning away from him, then quickly points to a child whose hand is raised.

"Carver," says the child, relieved to have finally been allowed to say the name aloud.

"Carver," repeats Mrs. Gray. "Let's all read his name: George Washington Carver," they all say as Mrs. Gray points to each word.

"All right," Mrs. Gray continues, "anyone know or want to guess what we should know about George Washington Carver and the peanut?" Several students speculate: he discovered how to grow peanuts; he found a better way to grow peanuts. Mrs. Gray accepts each of these as wise speculations, then says:

"When I don't know something and it's time to learn, where do you think I can find the answer?"

"In the encyclopedia," several students volunteer, "on your desk."

"On my desk," Mrs. Gray repeats. "Nothing will keep me from learning," she says, excitedly reinforcing the value of learning as she frequently does. "George Washington Carder was another person who wanted to learn more. He was curious. And he always wanted to do something to help others. Now there is a long story about George Washington Carver and I hope this afternoon we can see a film that will tell you more about him.

"But the exciting thing about Mr. Carver was that he wanted to go to school and learn. And he did get to go to school and learn. And it wasn't his mother and father who sent him. As I remember the story, I think his parents died and some people who were not even related to him found out that he had a brain and that he wanted to learn to read, and to write, and to spell, and to make the world in which he lived a better place." She goes on to explain some of the many useful things Carver discovered could be done with peanuts.

Sharing has lasted longer than usual this morning and it is time for recess. At this point, Mrs. Gray has the children, girls first, then boys, line up and go directly across the corridor to the bathroom with her Title I aide, Mrs. Jones. (The students qualify to have the part-time assistance of a Title I aide because they are "low achieving" according to their latest standardized test scores.) During these traditionally cold winter months, Mrs. Gray takes advantage of the customary indoor recess to get in more work. Today happens to be a balmy day, but it is raining.

While the students are taking care of their personal needs, Mrs. Gray summarizes the lesson on Carver in the morning story, which she prints on the chalkboard:

> George Washington Carver
>
> George Washington Carver was a great Afro-American scientist. He made many useful things from the peanut. He made paints, and he also found that there was oil in peanuts. Many people today cook with peanut oil.

When the children return to the classroom, Mrs. Gray has volunteers take turns reading the story aloud. She helps them "unlock" words as they proceed.

Spelling is next on the agenda. Mrs. Gray assigns two students the task of giving out the small sheets of lined spelling paper for their daily spelling pretest. Words on the weekly spelling list are a combination of (1) words that review the phonic elements the children have learned and (2) high-frequency words that are included on several first- and second-grade spelling lists Mrs. Gray uses.

Beginning with a list of six words in September, Mrs. Gray has now worked up to a weekly spelling list of twelve words. The first week of school Mrs. Gray's goals included having her students master the spelling of these six words:

1. home
2. and
3. can
4. look
5. see
6. come

They also learned to compose sentences using them. Notice that with the addition of easy-to-spell words like I and go, the children can form simple sentences (I can go home.), having mastered only the first six spelling words the first week of school. This establishes the need to know how to spell. Many believe first or second grade is too early to expect children to spell. Mrs. Gray says that weekly spelling lists/test are too much for young children unless they're made to feel a need for knowing how to spell. She tells her students that they could be a big help to their mothers, who might be too busy to write a needed note to the teacher --- if they can write and are helpful children they can write that note so their parent only needs to sign it. Mrs. Gray:

> You have to give them so many areas of need; tell them why they need to know how to write. It is too much to expect first and second graders to know how to spell unless you make them use the skill.

From the beginning they were expected to compose sentences for their daily spelling activity. Shortly after that, they were expected to write paragraphs and stories. Students who had trouble spelling felt the need daily to master this skill. If someone did something nice for them, Mrs. Gray often suggested that the children express their appreciation by writing thank-you notes. Later, when Mrs. Gray would ask for suggestions of what they could do to thank someone, they volunteered, "We can write a letter." She often had the children write comments on their day's activities (either positive or negative) in their homework books so their parents would see it when signing it. So they often were made to feel the need for the basic skills they were learning.

Students must know how to speak in sentences and in Standard American English for their discussions on current events and on Great Black Americans. In addition, they must compose sentences in their daily spelling and composing activities.

On Monday of each week, without fail, the entire spelling list is presented for the students to copy in their spelling books. Then on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday a few of the words are dictated in pretests to help students master their spelling over a period of several days. On Friday, students are tested on the entire list. This test is completed in their spelling books and the final grade is entered in Mrs. Gray's record book. This procedure was much abbreviated with Mrs. Gray's top fourth grade class, which received a spelling list on Monday and a test on Friday--no pretests in between.

This morning Mrs. Gray dictates four words, using each one in a sentence, then pronouncing it again. After students have written each word, they are told to write a sentence using each word, as they have been told to do since September. Then they are to use the spelling words to complete sentences that Mrs. Gray has written on the chalkboard.

While the students are completing their spelling activity, Mrs. Gray goes to the back chalkboard and begins writing the day's writing assignment:

Creative Writing

picture of a
mailman

1. Do you know this man?
2. How does he help you and your neighbors?
3. How do you help him?

Words for You

postman
letters
daily
mail
slot
uniform

When Mrs. Gray finishes printing the writing assignment on the chalkboard, she calls the students' attention to it and has volunteers read each line, helping them apply various phonic principles to "unlock words."

"Okay, very good unlocking of words," she says, when the oral reading is completed. "You think about those questions and put your answers into a story. Now you saw Mrs. Coombs' first graders' writing---I hope that will help us improve."

(Mrs. Coombs' first graders had Mrs. Mercer for their teacher in kindergarten. Mrs. Coombs is one of the new White teachers who was able to assimilate easily into the Harriet Tubman faculty --- she is a strict teacher who has high expectations of her students and insists on hard work and excellence. She spends a large portion of the day on reading, writing and oral language activities. Mrs. Coombs continued the kind of school regiment to which her students had become accustomed in Mrs. Mercer's kindergarten. By February, Mrs. Coombs' class was writing at a level that was equivalent to the writing ability of the average first grader in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Here is a sample copied just the way the young author in Mrs. Coombs' first grade class wrote it:

Gerald the Giant

> I have a big giant who lives with me. His name is Gerald. I love him and he loves me. One time we went for a walk. He took me to the park and the playground and we had lots and lots of fun! That night it was time to go to bed. I sleeped in the bed and Gerald sleeps in the cellar.
>
> ---Tarik)

Mrs. Morgan, one of the less-structured White teachers who is new to the school and has experienced repeated difficulty managing her class of high-achieving second graders, enters room 207 with two boys and a girl who are her worst behavior problems. The rest of her class is going on a trip today and these students, because they have "acted out" all week, have forfeited the opportunity to accompany them. She wants to know if Mrs. Gray will allow them to stay in her room until their class returns. Mrs. Gray agrees and has a student volunteer explain to the visting children the morning routine, class rules, and morning assignments as Mrs. Morgan thanks Mrs. Gray and leaves the room.

"If you're writing a story, it must have a what?" Mrs. Gray continues introducing the writing activity. Hands go up.

"It must have a title," answers Yolander, after being selected to respond. "And you will have more than two sentences," she warns. Some children raise their hands and want to tell Mrs. Gray the answers to some of the questions concerning the mailman, but Mrs. Gray says, "Talk to me through your writing."

Tomorrow, after the class reviews the stories they have written, Mrs. Gray will add the mailman's picture to the pictures of the policeman and fireman which have been added one-by-one to the portion of the long, narrow bulletin board entitled "Neighborhood Helpers" that extends across the back of the classroom.

"All right," says Mrs. Gray. "So you have your spelling to do and creative writing. Keep moving!"

While the children are working independently, Mrs. Gray, holding her roll book under the papers, proceeds to return to them work she has corrected. While she is giving out the papers, she takes roll. As she walks around returning the papers, she comments on the work the children are in the process of doing.

"Look at your writing and see if it's a half space as you print. Or is it too small? Be sure to use finger spaces."

Mr. Horowitz, one of the reading teachers who is assisting the reading resource teacher in ordering textbooks for the entire school, comes in to find out what reading books Mrs. Gray will need for her class next year.

"Why does everything have to be done at the last minute?" Mrs. Gray thinks to herself. Yesterday during the faculty meeting (children in all schools in District 13 are dismissed at 2:30 on Tuesdays so that principals may meet with teachers), they decided to adopt and begin purchasing one core reading series to be used in every classroom.

"We're always told on the 12th that textbook orders must be submitted by the 24th," Mr. Best had said as he presented the idea to the faculty. "If we adopt one reading series and order the materials centrally, we will always be able to get our order in quickly...We're also getting less and less money for books, so with one core reading series, we can supply the whole school more cheaply. Even more importantly, the book will follow the child and he will, therefore, receive more systematic instruction."

The teachers liked the idea of all of this, but many of them (including Mrs. Gray) wanted to have a say in what reading series was adopted. "After all, we know more about teaching reading," they tell me. They did not quibble over this faux pas on Mr. Best's part, however, since they were overjoyed that they would be assured of having sufficient reading materials next year --- and, they hoped, continuously thereafter.

Over the past decade, since the children's standardized test scores have been improving, funds contributed by the federal government have steadily decreased. It is the standard story of schools receiving less money the better their students do. Frequently achievement sinks again with this sudden loss of funding and, consequently, supplies.

How have they managed with the less than abundant materials available? For the most part, they scoured the old book closets, located whatever complete sets of reading materials were available, and tapped their own and their reading teachers' resources. "You do whatever you have to do," I heard teachers tell one another when they discussed how to make out with the limited materials available. They suggested to one teacher, at a meeting in November, (apparently appalled when she complained that her class hadn't been able to have math because there weren't enough fifth-grade math textbooks) that she use the fifth grade textbook for boardwork and have the children practice skills in the third grade workbooks, which were available. "But that will mean double work for me!" she said later to her friends, when the meeting was over. "You do whatever you have to do," they told her. "That's what we have to do."

Having less money to work with forced them to consolidate their funds and order reading materials centrally, through Mr. Best's office. The fact that having a core reading series would create more coordinated efforts in teaching reading was a secondary consideration in the minds of Mr. Best and the reading teacher since, as far as they could see, the Metropolis School System's Levels Tests had already done a great deal to structure the reading curriculum. A planned reading curriculum was already a feature in this school, as it is in every single successful school in the literature (See Chapter Two.) Adopting a core reading series would merely serve to further ease the coordination of each teacher's efforts.

They were told they were going to adopt one core reading program just yesterday, and immediately after this announcement, Mr. Best had asked them to agree to adopt a reading program that the primary teachers had seen demonstrated previously and had positively reacted to. Today, the reading resource teacher was already asking for their orders.

Mrs. Gray is anxious to cooperate with anything that will facilitate the children's progress. She is annoyed, however, that Mr. Horowitz has been sent around now, in the middle of her class, without warning, for her to "off the top of her head" tell him what reading materials she anticipates she will need for her students next year.

She leaves the classroom for a couple of minutes to stand outside of the door and supply the information Mr. Horowitz requested. Most of the children continue working while she is gone. Some of them are becoming restless, however, due to this additional interruption.

"We will need the 2-2 and 3-1 readers next year...and, more than likely, some of the children will be going into the 3-2 reader towards the end of the school year," Mrs. Gray tells Mr. Horowitz. She goes on to stress that she will need a teacher's guide to accompany each reader and, of course, workbooks for each child.

The Sounding Group meets now. This is a small group of about ten children who have exhibited difficulty decoding and blending words. The children in this group walk to the rear of the classroom and gather around Mrs. Gray at her desk, forming a tight circle. The Sounding Group began with that core group of students who needed most to work on their decoding skills. Then, as the school year progressed, Mrs. Gray opened up the group to "any child who recognized he was having difficulty sounding."

Throughout the school, in grades K through 6, phonics and word analysis skills are emphasized just as they are emphasized in other successful reading programs. In kindergarten, students learn the sound/symbol correspondence for most of the spelling patterns of the English language. This is probably why Mrs. Gray had only a core of students who had not yet mastered preliminary decoding skills---despite the fact that, due to a number of tragic circumstances, they had received little systematic reading instruction in first grade. They had a strong phonics program in kindergarten.

"We're having a terrible time with sounds, some of us," Mrs. Gray says, beginning the lesson. "Let's just look back at some of our old sounds." She points to each letter or letter combination on the page and the students say the sound represented. Here she is using the published series Distar.

"Eee, aey, uh, er, oh, eye, buh, mmm, kuh, duh, tuh," they say.

"That was an old lesson," Mrs. Gray says. "Let's turn over to where we are. Sound out. Get ready." Together they say the sound of each letter as she points to it.

"Very good! The faster we recognize the sounds, the faster we can sound out and read words. All right? Let's see what we can do here," Mrs. Gray turns to a page where the children must blend the sounds to form words. "When I touch the sound, you make it and keep on making it as long as I touch it. Do not go ahead of the pointer. Go!" They sound out bringing, then start. Then they stumble over the long i in time. Tinika is the only student to pronounce the word correctly.

"Why did she call this eye?" Mrs. Gray asks, pointing to the i with a horizontal line drawn over it. "What did she see that you didn't see?"

"The silent e," they say.

"That tells you the first vowel says its --"

"Name," the children complete the sentence.

"Okay. Sound out. Get ready." They continue to blend sounds to form words, with Mrs. Gray reminding them of phonetic principles when necessary. They continue by decoding art, cart, start, started.

Mrs. Gray gives out stories for the children to decode that utilize the spelling patterns and phonetic principles they have learned so far. The children read their stories to Mrs. Gray, one-by-one, and she comments on their individual performances. Many of them read smoothly and assuredly.

"Shawn and Dawn, no, no, no," Mrs. Gray admonishes two students in another area of the classroom who have moved their seats closer to the chalkboard. "Come back to your seats, Shawn and Dawn. You can see the chalkboard perfectly well." The two children pick up their materials and begin to move. "And do the best you can from your own seats, because you're not following the rules."

Tammy continues reading her story as Mrs. Gray chastises Shawn and Dawn. "Now wasn't that a long story. And a beautiful job!" Mrs. Gray says to Tammy when she finally finishes reading. She hands Tammy another phonically-controlled story that reinforces the sound/spelling she has been having trouble with. "Now you can read this and answer the questions. Read the question and circle the right answer. I'll mark it later. And if you want to practice writing, you can do this part," Mrs. Gray tells her. "I'm very proud of you." Tammy returns to her seat with the story she will take home and read to her parents.

The children enjoyed getting these take-home papers and Mrs. Gray discovered that students who were not bad enough at sounding to warrant being in the group for them often bartered for them. "How did you get this?" Mrs. Gray would often ask them. "Well, I gave my pencil to Jamal and he gave me this." When Mrs. Gray finishes hearing each of the children in her sounding group decode the stories she's given them and reviewed their respective assignments, she calls the children in her first Uptown Downtown reading group back to the long table to have their reading lesson.

"Now, Uptown Downtown. Quietly." The children in this reading group begin gathering their materials and moving towards the back of the room. "Bring your workbooks; let's see how far you got," says Mrs. Gray, beginning to look at one of the students workbooks. "I only have Shawn's book here...You didn't finish," she tells Shawn. "You skipped some of these; you need to check this page again." She continues checking the pages Shawn has completed since yesterday. "Good," she comments, "Good!"

"Okay," Mrs. Gray says, beginning to talk to the reading group that has assembled around her. "We're ready for page 82. Well, really 83. Let's see how many have finished up to page 82," she says, referring to their workbooks. "We're not doing it now, Maurice," she warns. "How many people are ready for page 83?" Most of the children's hands go up. "Let's take a look at it. We're working with the word what?"

"Than."

"Say it clearly."

"Than."

"Now, what I want you to do is read these little stories at the top and then locate---or find---all the words that begin like the word what?"

"Than." the children answer.

"Than. When you find them, put a line under them. . At the bottom, read your question, read your sentence, and then underline the one best answer to the question. Okay?...Then on page 84, it's very easy because all you have to do is what?" A child answers correctly. "Uh-huh, but at the bottom of this, you're going to -- uh, it's not the title this time---

"Did something happen to Jerome. What's the matter with Jerome Mrs. Gray asks. Jerome has arrived with tears in his eyes. He is accompanied by Mrs. Johnson, the Home and School Coordinator.

"Good morning, Mrs. Gray. Where's James?" Mrs. Johnson asks.

"He's up in reading; What---did something happen to Jerome?"

"Do you have James' new phone number?" Mrs. Carter says, not answering Mrs. Gray's question.

"Oh. You want to look up in my closet and get the roll book? See if you can see it up there. ...Good morning, Jerome." Mrs. Gray says gently as he enters the room, removing his soiled navy coat and knitted cap. Hurry and catch up with us; I think you'll enjoy what's going on."

"And Tinika, can you explain to him what we're doing? Tinika H.,"she repeats, getting Tinika H.'s attention. "Can you tell him what we're doing?"

"Yes," Tinika H. finally hears Mrs. Gray and looks up from her work.

"Wait until he's dressed, then you come over and tell him the things that you've learned."

While this is going on, a small group works with the Title One reading aide, Mrs. Jones, on the tape recorder and earphones at the large round table near the front of the classroom. "You say it first," Mrs. Jones tells them, "and then the machine...If you don't sound out your letters, you will not know how to read." The rest of the class works on the morning assignments: copying the morning story about George Washington Carver, completing the spelling sentences, and composing a story about the mailman. Knowing they have much to do, the vast majority of them work steadily.

"All right, now, you have up to page 84 to do," Mrs. Gray says, returning to the Uptown Downtown reading group, "Think you can do that?" Mrs. Gray asks, referring to their workbooks. "Yes," the children say.

"Now some of you have been absent and have missed work," says Mrs. Gray, returning to her reading groups. "Now you have to get with me and make up the work. You will not get a new workbook until every page in this one is completed." Pages are to be completed when they do independent work in the mornings and, sometimes, in the afternoons. They are to complete the new pages assigned and any they have missed due to absence. When their reading lesson is over, they will do these workbook pages along with the work already assigned, as well as read one of the Bank Street reading series' independent readers.

"This page has to do with comprehension. The child who is thinking will listen, read, and the last thing he will do is talk," says Mrs. Gray, introducing the workbook page they will do next.

"Oh! We were reading such a delightful story yesterday, weren't we?" says Mrs. Gray, beginning the directed reading activity for today.

"Yes," the children respond.

"It was---what?"

Mrs. Gray reviews with the children the story they read yesterday, its title, what it was about. They read it silently under her direction and answered the gamut of questions about it that are in the traditional directed reading activity.

"Let's read that out loud," says Mrs. Gray after they review what the story was about, "because there was a lot of talking in that story and I'd just like to hear someone take Ken's part, and Sister's part, and -- who else was in the story?"

"Grandmother," says Shawn.

"Grandmother," Mrs. Gray repeats.

"All right. Can you use the table of contents and tell Mrs. Gray the page?"

"Yes," several of them say.

"Shawn is doing it right," Mrs. Gray says proudly. "What page is the story on?"

"One-hundred-fifty."

"Thank you, Shawn. One-hundred-fifty... We'll soon be finished with this book, won't we?" Mrs. Gray says while they turn to the right page. "Look at the page quickly---

"Diane," Mrs. Gray says to a child in another part of the classroom, "are you talking?" Diane nods. "Come up here." Diane moves to sit near Mrs. Gray.

"All right, on page one-hundred-fifty, look at it quickly. Scan---that means look up and down the page quickly---skim and scan the page and tell me how many people are talking." Vanessa raises her hand. "How many people are talking?" Mrs. Gray asks her.

"Two."

"Who are they?" More hands go up.

"Ken and Grandmother," answers Thomas.

"Which part would you like to be, Thomas?"

"Ken."

"You want to be Ken?" Thomas nods. More hands go up of children who are volunteering to be Grandmother.

Vanessa is chosen to be Grandmother and Milton, the narrator. "All right, let's go! Will you read the title for us, Milton? And then we'll begin."

"'Ken and his Magic Tricks'," Milton reads.

"All right, who's talking first?" Mrs. Gray asks the children. It's La Tanya's turn. She begins reading, then Mrs. Gray interrupts her when she reads, "said Grandmother."

"No. We're not going to read that part; we're only reading those parts that have the talking marks....All right, let's start again and see if La Tanya can follow. Read the title again." The children begin again, reading less haltingly this time. Mrs. Gray continues to interrupt when they read something other than dialogue.

"Let's go. Now you're Ken; talk like him." Thomas reads smoothly now. "Okay!" Mrs. Gray compliments him when he finishes. The children continue taking the roles of the various story characters with Mrs. Gray assisting them in reading the appropriate parts.

"All right," Mrs. Gray tells La Tanya when she finishes some of her lines. "Now, you don't have to say 'said Grandmother'," Mrs. Gray reminds her, "because who's Grandmother?"

"La Tanya," some of the other children answer. La Tanya points to herself.

"Right! You're Grandmother. And he doesn't have to say 'said Ken' because you are Ken. Then let's begin. Once more, Milton." Mrs. Gray says. They read the page for the third time. Their fluency has improved noticeably.

"All right," Mrs. Gray says when they complete the page, "look quickly at the next page and find out who's talking."

"Ken," Milton volunteers.

"Is that the only person talking?" Mrs. Gray asks. More hands go up.

"Grandmother," La Tanya answers.

"Oh!" says Mrs. Gray. "Ken and Grandmother. Would you like to be Ken?" she asks Tiko. He nods. "Would you like to be Grandmother?" she asks Lauren, whose hand is raised. She accepts. "Now, remember, you have to look and read those parts only where the talking marks are. Never read 'said Ken' or 'said Grandmother.' Because you're the people talking. All right, Ken," Mrs. Gray says to Tiko. He begins reading one-word-at-a-time.

"Is that the way he sounded?" Mrs. Gray asks patiently.

Tiko continues reading a little more smoothly, but more haltingly than the rest of the group.

"All right," Mrs. Gray says, turning the page. "Who's on this page?" she asks. Hands go up. "Who do we need on this page, Shawn?" she calls on one of the children who volunteered.

"Ken..."

"Ken and who...else?"

"And Grandmother."

"Ken and Grandmother. Would you like to be Ken?" she asks Shawn.

"Yes."

"And I'll be Grandmother," Mrs. Gray volunteers. Shawn reads in a smooth, natural way, "Never say 'said Ken' because you are Ken," she reminds him. Then Mrs. Gray reads Grandmother's part with lots of expression, continuing on to the next page. "All right. Who do we need here?" she asks the children. The children tell her, locating the characters more quickly now. The children volunteer and are assigned parts for this page.

"Alice, Alice..." Mrs. Gray speaks to a child walking up to the pencil sharpener. "Please do your work. I am very displeased to see the same people walking around the room," she announces.

"Do you have this book?" Mrs. Porter, one of the parent volunteers is asking Mrs. Gray where she can find Around the City, the Bank Street primer she is reviewing with Arnold, a student who just entered Harriet Tubman last week.

"Up in the front," Mrs. Gray tells her. The children never stop reading.

"Who's Ellen?" Mrs. Gray assists the children in continuing to read their assigned parts. "Who's Grandmother?" she asks when they pause again. No answer. "Well, I'll have to take it; Grandmother isn't ready." Mrs. Gray reads Grandmother's part dramatically. The child who is playing Ellen continues. Then Shawn begins with "Ken said."

"No. You're reading only where Ken is talking." Mrs. Porter comes back again to ask about the location of the book she'd inquired about a couple of minutes ago. Mrs. Gray gives her further ideas of where to look for it, then returns to the reading group.

"Say only what they're saying. We know who's saying it because you are that person," Mrs. Gray reminds them again, returning to the reading group. They finish reading the narration and dialogue aloud, with marked improvement. This done, Mrs. Gray says they did a good job for a first try at reading dialogue.

Continuing the reading lesson, she asks them what they will read next in their books. They look at the table of contents and find that the next selection is a poem entitled "People," that is on page 157 (out of 189). They turn to the page and study the illustration.

"We do know in this world there are many races of people. Mrs. Gray says, getting the children ready to read the poem. "Take a look at all the different races there are," she says, referring to the illustration. "There are all kinds...all kinds of people. Now read the poem and see what you can find out.

"Little friend. Little friend. I don't want to hear anyone... don't open your mouth." Mrs. Gray says when Tiko starts to read the poem aloud.

"All right, how many people have finished?" The children raise their hands.

"The author of this poem made a discovery." Mrs. Gray continues when she sees all the children have finished reading. Read the poem again and see the two things he or she found out."

"The person made a discovery and found out two things..." Mrs. Gray repeats, when she sees a blank look on Milton's face.

"Oh!" Milton says, excited.

"Now don't start reciting one of the lines from the poem," Mrs. Gray warns. "You think about what you read and see if you can find our the first thing this person discovered. Just find the very first thing."

ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE PA: "Will Mr. Brown please pick up the telephone...Mr. Brown, pick up the telephone." There is no pause in the lesson as the announcement is made.

Cynthia is called on. "What is it?" Mrs. Gray asks her, referring to the first thing the person in the poem discovered.

"What's the first thing he discovered?" she asks again. Cynthia is unable to answer. Shawn has an idea.

"It is very funny," he says.

"Well, you didn't tell me what was funny.

"You found it?" Mrs. Gray says to Mrs. Porter, the parent volunteer who has finally found the book she was looking for.

Shawn continues answering the question. "Well, all of that was just before he made or she made a discovery," Mrs. Gray tells him when he finishes. "The person made a discovery. They did see a funny thing, but what did they discover? Find out about all those things." ~~Mrs. Gray reminds the children to give complete answers.~~

Mrs. Porter is now reading quite loudly with Arnold.

"He found out that all the people he saw with all kinds of faces, he found out how many he did not know. Finish the poem and find out what the other discovery is. You'll never get it with your pencil in your hand," Mrs. Gray reminds Cynthia. Tiko knows the answer. Mrs. Gray motions for him to whisper it in her ear.

"All right," she says, smiling when Tiko tells her. "Very good. All right, Tiko shows good thinking. The person found he didn't know them and then he also found out they didn't know him... All right," she says to Tiko, "Will you read the poem nicely for us, please?"

Tiko reads smoothly:

People

I look at people's faces everywhere I go
I think it's very funny how many I don't know
I look at all the faces, the faces that I see
I think it's very funny how many don't know me.

"Okay. You did that very nicely.... Anyone think they can do better than Tiko?" Volunteers take turns reading the poem aloud, then Mrs. Gray reads it along with them, helping them to model her expression.

"Very good," she tells them when they have finished. "You cannot read one word at a time."

Both of Mrs. Gray's assistants are present now. Mrs. Jones works with the children on Oralographics at the listening station, while Mrs. Porter works on the vocabulary in reviewing Around the City with Arnold.

"Your new story for tomorrow is going to be---" Mrs. Gray asks, turning to the next page.

"'The Look Alike Houses'," the children answer, decoding the title.

"'The Look Alike Houses.' Had we worked harder, we would have started this story today. We'll start it tomorrow...What does it mean when something looks alike?" Mrs. Gray asks, preparing them for tomorrow's lesson.

"O-o-oh!" some of the children say, putting up their hands.

"I see three houses." Mrs. Gray continues to clarify. "What does it mean by the 'look alike' houses?" Hands go up.

"What do you think?" she calls on Victor.

"They have the same bricks," Victor says.

"Same bricks---" Mrs. Gray repeats, drawing out the word to indicate he should continue.

"Same windows..."

"Same windows," she repeats.

"Same steps," Victor continues.

"Same steps. Well everything seems to be---"

"The same," the children say.

"The same," she repeats. "Does anyone here live in a house that looks just like his neighbor's?" Several of the children's hands go up. "You do?" she asks dramatically. "The bricks are the same?"

"Yes."

"The doors and windows are the same?"

"Yes."

"Do you live in such a house?"

"Yes," several of the children say.

"I live in such a house.", Mrs. Gray tells them. My neighbor's house is just like mine. It's painted the same color, same bricks, same wall...Does anyone else live in a look-alike house?" Several of the children nod.

"Well, tomorrow the story is going to be very interesting. About look alike houses...If they are the same on the outside - here's something to think about---go home and think about---are they the same on the inside?"

"No," Shawn says.

"You say 'no' already?" she asks him. He nods. "How many people say 'no'?" Most of the children raise their hands. "Do you mean to tell me if they're the same on the outside, they're not the same on the inside?" Mrs. Gray asks, incredulously.

"No, they don't have to be the same on the inside," the children say. "They can have different furniture," La Tanya says.

"Oh? They don't have the same furniture on the inside?" Mrs. Gray continues her wide-eyed tone of disbelief. The children go along with it, smiling openly.

"Some houses, they probably don't have no dog," Clifford continues.

"Any dog?"

"or cat," Clifford says.

"Oh? Some look alike houses may have a dog and others may not. Any other thoughts before we go into the story tomorrow?"

"Some look alike houses might not have a stove," says Steven. Mrs. Gray nods.

"And not the same TV," says Lawrence.

"And not the same TV," repeats Mrs. Gray. "I never thought about that!"

"And not the same toys," continues Maurice.

"Somebody don't--Somebody might don't have no bathtub," says Frederick.

"Might not have," say Mrs. Gray and Maurice.

"Might not have a bathtub," Frederick says.

"Well I can hardly wait for tomorrow", Mrs. Gray says, because I thought that if the houses looked alike on the outside, then surely they must be the same on the inside."

"I said yes," says La Tanya.

"You said yes?" says Mrs. Gray, still giving no hint what she thinks the correct answer is, or if, indeed, there is one. "I thought that. But look at all the people who said no," she says, moving her hand over the reading group, many of whom are shaking their heads vigorously. "And they're still saying 'no', La Tanya, so we'll have to work hard and get into the story tomorrow and find out who is right. Are you right by saying 'yes'?"

"No-o," several of the children say.

"Or are these others right by saying 'no'?" So let's go back to our seats." The children begin gathering their belongings to go. "Stop for a moment before you move so that you will do what you are doing quietly," Mrs. Gray says softly, when she sees a potential bottleneck in the exodus back to their seats. "You cannot ever leave here without doing that." The children continue in a less erratic fashion. "If someone is sitting in your seat, you'll have to sit somewhere else," Mrs. Gray says, still watching them and trying to anticipate problems.

"All right, Uptown, Downtown---The people who are working in Around the City (Primer) workbooks," she calls her next reading group back to work with her.

"No, no, no, no, no," Mrs. Gray sees two children pushing each other, trying to get through the narrow path between the bookcase and the long reading table to get a seat. "You just wait until everyone takes a seat," she says to both of them. "You don't push and shove like that. You'll have to take what's left." The two girls move against the wall and wait for the other children in their reading group to sit down at the long table.

"Victor," Mrs. Gray says, looking towards the front of the classroom. "Go back to your seat because you are talking already." He had taken a seat close to the chalkboard and next to his best friend, Shawn, and they were comparing notes. Victor, who hates to be criticized, frowns deeply and returns to his assigned seat, which had been unoccupied. "You work right there as best you can," she tells him.

"Okay," Mrs. Gray says, giving her full attention back to the reading group. She then sees that Raymond is standing, unable to find a seat at the long table. "Raymond, what can you do?" He sulks. "If you can't think of anything, you can always sit on the rug on the floor--if you can't find a chair," she gives him a hint. Raymond continues to stand, looking grim. Mrs. Gray spends no more time on this and returns to the group. After about three minutes, Raymond gets a chair and sits with the group.

"I think you already know where you ought to be," Mrs. Gray says to the group, referring to where they are in their workbooks. They are completing pages in the workbook to the book they finished reading only last week. They have now begun reading the last book of the first grade level: Uptown, Downtown of the Bank Street Readers, the official core reading series for Metro's federally-funded Follow-Through program. She reviews the pages they should have completed yesterday and which she has marked, then goes on to make sure the children understand how to do the two pages that follow.

"Now, you're working with two words: his and ---"

"Her."

"Her. You certainly have to know what the story is about before you can choose his or her, don't you?"

"Yes," most of the children say.

"If it's about a boy, you certainly wouldn't underline her, would you?"

"No," several of them say.

"Now, let's read carefully as you do that one. You've done this before," she turns the page. "On page 64, you're simply reading and doing what?"

"Drawing a line."

"Drawing a line under the word, that what?"

"That makes sense."

"That makes sense," she repeats. "How many people think they can do these two pages?" All the children raise their hands. They will complete the pages when their directed-reading activity is completed.

"All right. Now we were just getting started in the story yesterday when we had to stop," Mrs. Gray moves on to the children's reading textbooks, now. "Let's go over our words quickly." Hands go up. "Alice?" Mrs. Gray calls on the children one-by-one to decode the words listed on the chart paper that she has attached to the chalkboard. These are new words they will need to know to read the next story.

Mr. Charles

Vocabulary

Mr. Charles
breakfast
baby
tonight
floors
second
food
every
family
window
sleep
let
open
third

Mr. Charles can sleep on many floors.
He has breakfast in the window.
A baby stays on the second floor.
A big family lives on the third floor.
Tonight a man will open the door and let him in.
Mr. Charles gets food on every floor.

Mrs. Gray helps them use the phonics skills they have mastered to decode the words.

"What does *en* say?" she asks them, pointing to the *en* in *open*.

"n."

"What does this say?" she asks, pointing to the *o* then the *p*, then sliding her finger under both of the letters: op.

"O-o-o. p-p-p. O-o-p-p e-n. O-o-pen. Open. *Open*." The children say.

"The last word, please?"

"E -v-ery. *Every*." Most of the children say.

"*Every*. All right. But I know that Frederick isn't ready. Sherita isn't ready, Ronnell is not ready, and neither is Raymond," she calls the names of the children who made large errors in decoding the new words.

"I can read them," says Sherita.

"Would you like to read them for me, then?" asks Mrs. Gray. Sherita reads the words much better this time. Then Ronnell wants to continue. "Very good," says Mrs. Gray. More of the children she named raise their hands to volunteer. "Come on--" she tells them, "if you want to read." They continue volunteering and reading until almost all of the words have been decoded and read aloud once again, this time by those who have the most trouble "sounding."

"My little friend," Mrs. Gray spots one of the visiting students from Mrs. Morgan's class. The young man is not doing his work. "Lunch time is coming," she says, threatening to take away the recess that follows. "Lunch time *is* coming and you are not doing what the other children are doing." The first grader looks up, startled. "So at lunchtime, I'll keep you here with me when the others go outside for recess---then we'll find out what is wrong with you. Mrs. Gray gave you four things to do. Have you done them?" He nods, weakly. "Have you done them?" she asks him again.

"No," he shakes his head.

"Well, you're not going to get outside unless your work is done," she tells him, matter-of-factly. "Now, you keep talking and see what happens."

"The next one, please," Mrs. Gray turns back to the reading group. The children work on decoding the last word, then Mrs. Gray tells the children:

"Now, what should you do when you know you don't know those words?"

"Study," the children say.

"How can you study them?" Mrs. Gray asks them.

"Read them."

"Read them," Mrs. Gray repeats.

"Write them," the children add.

"You can write them down; we have cards. You can get the cards. Instead of Mrs. Gray writing them all the time," she says, referring to the word cards the children carry home daily. "You write what you don't know," she says softly. "And review them on your own. That is your---"

"Responsibility," the children finish the sentence.

"I want you to show me the words that you've written down before you go home today, the words from "Mr. Charles" that you did not know. And it is subject to be more than one. Now, you get these cards, you write on both sides," she continues, holding up a blank card. "All right?"

"You three little people," says Mrs. Gray, honing in on the children who had the most difficulty decoding the new vocabulary, "I want these words written," she says, referring to the words she wrote on cards one-by-one, as they were decoded incorrectly. "Not all of them, but the ones you know you don't know. Okay?" They nod.

"All right," Mrs. Gray continues, looking at the entire group now. "We'll move into our story."

A child then tells on what page the story, "Mr. Charles," begins; the children turn to page 48.

In another part of the room, at the large round table, the Title One reading aide, Mrs. Jones, has the children sound out nonsense words: shap, thim, pith, chank.

"We've been reading about Mr. Charles," Mrs. Gray says when the children have their books open to the first page of the story. "We talked a great deal about the city and what is there, and all the objects in the picture,---"

Mrs. Gray directs the children in reading the story entitled "Mr. Charles." Before reading each portion of the story, she generates curiosity about what will follow, then gives the students a question to find the answer to in their reading. After the students have read the designated one or two pages of the story silently, she asks them to answer the question, then - ever probing - she asks them to draw conclusions and speculate about what will follow. When the story is completed, Mrs. Gray summarizes what the students are to do next, then the students return to their own desks.

Mrs. Gray gets up from the long reading table in the rear of the classroom. She walks among her students' desks, peering over their shoulders to see how they are doing on their current assignments. By now, all of her reading groups have had their directed reading lesson and most of the children have independently completed the morning assignments.

"Mrs. Gray knows you have an excellent mind, Vanessa," Mrs. Gray tells one of her students. "Mrs. Gray will help you get where you belong. You were in another class and you thought you couldn't keep up. But if you keep doing as well as you are, you'll get there soon." Vanessa beams.

Mrs. Gray holds up some extra worksheets she has discovered and offers to give them to "a child who will really work with them." Many of the children raise their hands, expressing a desire to have them. Mrs. Gray finally gives them to James "because he has been really trying." Learning was always presented as a reward in Mrs. Gray's classroom; and as a corollary to this, learning was occasionally denied when a child misbehaved. For example, a child might be denied the opportunity to participate in his particular reading group's directed reading activity. This punishment appeared to be extremely undesirable to Mrs. Gray's students and was, thus, seldom meted out.

Problems rarely had an opportunity to develop in Mrs. Gray's classroom since students were continuously engaged in learning basic skills, the vast majority of which were related to becoming literate. Positive reinforcement was used routinely, not only in her classroom, but in every classroom I observed. Students were taught that "school is children's work," and that their job was to see to it that they learned as much as they could everyday. Mrs. Gray told her students that her job was not to discipline, but to teach. And that it was their responsibility to make sure that she did teach and not spend her time disciplining them.

Mrs. Gray would tell her students that she was a teacher, and not a policewoman. She told her students --- and reinforced this fact throughout the school year --- that she could not spend her time disciplining them because it would take time away from teaching. She told them that her job was to help them learn, to help them make the maximum use of each hour of the day, in an effort to assure that they reach the goals that they had set for themselves. She also warned her students to not accept mere custodial help from teachers they may have in the future. A teacher's job is to teach. That is her responsibility, she told them. Their responsibility, as students, is to come to school everyday prepared to learn --- and to make sure they do all they can to help their teacher do her job.

For a few more minutes, Mrs. Gray continues walking around the classroom, looking at what the students are doing. Then, she sits at the small table in the front of the room and continues marking the homework the children stacked neatly on the table when they began the day. Every so often, she has a student come up so she can review a concept with him.

"OK, let's get ready for lunch," says Mrs. Gray, rising from her chair and turning to scan the entire class. Children whose parents signed their homework books are told to come up first to get their free lunch tickets. Mrs. Gray has reinforced the need for parents to sign their homework upon its completion each evening. This is a rule in every Back to Basics school. But, like most of the Back to Basics policies, it was a policy of the Harriet Tubman School before it became a Back to Basics school. Becoming a Back to Basics school simply meant that the policy had the official sanction of the board of education.

Mrs. Gray did many things to get parents involved in their children's work. She knew that she needed the help of parents to support what she was doing in school. So she communicated continually with her students' parents, writing notes to them in their homework books, and sometimes getting students to write the notes themselves (thereby reinforcing the utility of being able to compose a note on ones own, as well as engendering parental support). Notes were written for positive reasons as often as they were written to enlist the parent's aid in getting the child to do something Mrs. Gray could not get him to do on her own. (The homework book also served as a vehicle for communication with the home in Mrs. Mercer's kindergarten classroom.) Mrs. Gray wrote many personal notes to her students' parents, but often, to relieve the arduous task of frequently communicating with the home, she simply attached a duplicated memo, such as the following, under the assignment that was copied in the student's homework book:

Dear Parent, *Date*

Your child ______ (child's name) ________________

_______ *Read well today.*

_______ *Does not pay attention.*

_______ *Did not do homework.*

_______ *Can write sentences.*

_______ *Can not write sentences.*

_______ *Obeys school rules.*

_______ *Must learn number sizes.*

_______ *Must come to school every day in order to LEARN and be promoted to the next grade.*

____

Will you please help?

Sign ____

Mrs. Gray often received notes from parents - her writing to them seemed to trigger this. Samples of the notes she received follow.

Dear Ms. Gray

Tinika gets pleanty of "help"! in her homework and spelling and hand writ. Tinika refuse to sit and do it Right all she do is try and get over I tell Tinika the Important of her neatness I am tired of covering up for her.

Sincerely,
Ms. Leora Johnson

P.S. Have a nice day!

* * * *

To Mrs. Gray

I saw Richard's spelling words and they were pittful. Is there anything that can be done other than leaving him in the same grade. Sorry I lost the paper.

Ms. Tucker

* * * *

Dear Mrs. Gray,
I dont have the money yet to get Mary her gym suit I am waiting to here from D.P.A. and it will take a while. I dont have a job either I'll get it when I get the money.

Thank you.
Mrs. Jackson

* * * *

from a woman Mrs. Gray taught:

Dear Mrs. Gray
I received your note about Sharon's behavior. I was very disappointed with her. I have taken care of the problem the best to my know how and hope that this won't happen again. I am very glad that you brought this to my attention. I will appreciate it very much if you would also use some disapline on her such as taking half her lunch break to make her complete undone work or give her a good spanking when she plays in class.

Thank you
M. Smith

P.S. Sharon did not copy her spelling word for the week. I wrote this on her Monday homework but she still fail to get them. I will try to get to talk to you one day this week and I hope that this problem can be solved very soon.

* * * *

1-23-1980

Mrs. Gray.

Will you please put Sandra off to her self. I know you had to put Juanita off to her self. I know Sandra at home she talk all the time so when she start you know what to do. please show her you are the teacher. Not her.

Thank you.

Sandra's Grandmother
Mrs. Hill

P.S. She want to be off to herself.

* * * *

Those who choose to do so (about 25 of the 31 children), return to the classroom with Mrs. Gray, lunches in hand, and eat at their desks. For the first time all day, Mrs. Gray sits at her desk in the rear of the classroom. Its location signifies the amount of use her desk gets; Mrs. Gray was always facing her students, and she was usually in close proximity to them. On the rare occasions when she sat at her desk, it was obvious that she was willingly receding into the background.

Making maximum use of every moment of the day, Mrs. Gray checks her students papers while she eats, calling them up one-by-one to discuss their work with her. Often, if they are discussing a sentence or a paragraph that the student has written, Mrs. Gray will ask, "What do you want to say here?" Together, the student and Mrs. Gray edit the composition, and then the student returns to his seat to incorporate the corrections into a second draft of the work.

After lunch, the students copy the homework assignment that Mrs. Gray wrote on the chalkboard during lunch:

Homework February 13, 1980

1. Watch the Olympics on TV.
2. Learn more about George W. Carver
3. Study for Pre-Test in Spelling.
4. Alphabetize all the words.
5. Why is tomorrow important?

They are given about fifteen minutes to copy the homework. In her never-ending effort to get her students to work quickly and with precision, after warning the students, Mrs. Gray sometimes erased the assignment after the fifteen minute period had elapsed. One month later, Mrs. Gray would begin to dictate the homework to the students, further helping them to see the utility of the literacy skills they were acquiring.

While students are copying their homework and completing work leftover from the morning assignments, Mrs. Gray calls students over to her one-by-one to discuss the compositions they wrote this morning. The students read their compositions aloud to Mrs. Gray and, together, they adjust the written paper to reflect what the student intended to say. Students take their edited compositions back to their desks to write good second drafts. Many of these second drafts will be displayed in the alcove near the entrance to the classroom.

At 1:25, the children line up and walk down the stairs and through the corridor to the library. Outside of the library doors, the class stops to look at a bulletin board the librarian has assembled entitled "Great, Beautiful, Black Women." Mrs. Gray asks her students to read the title, then name the women they recognize and tell what they know about each of them. The children recognize some of the women and subsequently tell what they know. Then, when the students' knowledge is exhausted, Mrs. Gray tells them about each of the women's contributions. Tacked to the bulletin board are the pictures of Harriet Tubman, Phyllis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, the Queen of Sheba, Coretta Scott King, Marian Anderson, Rosa Parks, Wilma Rudolph, Josephine Baker, and others.

In the library, the students see a filmstrip about George Washington Carver. Mrs. Gray eventually takes charge of the lesson, making sure that her students get the maximum benefit from it.

"Did he beg for anything?" she asks them.

"No," they reply.

"What did he do all his life?"

"Work."

"He loved reading and books," she tells them.

When the library period is over, the children return to the classroom and hurry to get ready to go to Language Arts class. They have to take their bookbags and coats with them since they will be dismissed from the Language Arts classroom. Mrs. Gray leaves the children alone with the teacher, Mrs. Golden, and returns to the classroom to take advantage of her planning period. She continues to check her students' papers, then begins gathering more material on great Black Americans to share with the children.

Conclusions

It is apparent from this description of what happens in Mrs. Gray's classroom that what she does is typical of what more effective teachers do, according to the literature reviewed in chapter two: She (1) assumes the role of a strong leader, using time efficiently, and keeping her students engaged in task-related activities including phonics, oral language, reading, spelling, and written composition; (2) organizes students into medium-to-large groups for instruction; (3) monitors work while being available to answer student-initiated questions; (4) structures lessons so that students are aware of objectives; and (5) sustains a classroom that is warm, friendly, democratic, and relatively free of disruptive behavior. In addition, Mrs. Gray has very high expectations of her students and shares these expectations with them continually. She also uses positive reinforcement extensively.

Consistent with the literature on what seems to help students become more proficient writers, students in Mrs. Gray's class receive extensive practice intended to develop their oral language skills. They also receive a great deal of functional writing practice and participate in individualized writing conferences almost daily, during which Mrs. Gray responds to their compositions. The student "talks through" the composition and they work together on making the writing reflect what the student intended to say. Mrs. Gray displays her students' writing on the bulletin board inside of her classroom, as well as in the alcove adjacent to the room's entrance. Students are expected to speak in sentences and use Standard American English at all times. This behavior is modelled by the teacher and positively reinforced by a desire to please the teacher even more than by the points the children receive. Moreover, Mrs. Gray read to her students virtually everyday. This was also true of most of the teachers I observed.

Discipline problems seldom get started in Mrs. Gray's classroom. This is due to a combination of (1) tight structures mutually agreed upon by the students and the teacher at the beginning of the school year; (2) consistency—i. e., always following the same procedure, always doing things "the right way"; and (3) positive reinforcement. I never heard Mrs. Gray raise her voice to the children the entire time I knew her. As you saw in Mrs. Gray's instructions to the substitute teacher (for the rare occasions when she is absent), there is a definite schedule that is adhered to consistently to assure that maximum use is made of every hour that students are in school. The fact that Mrs. Gray is seldom absent further ensures the consistency and continuity of each day.

Like Sara, the children in Mrs. Gray's classroom know that (1) they can achieve; (2) they are expected to achieve; and (3) they must achieve. The feeling that "they must achieve" no doubt adds some pressure to their lives, but is this pressure different from the pressure higher-socioeconomic-status children receive?

Aides were both a blessing and a curse to both Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Mercer. They provided the additional adults which were essential for individualizing instruction. But they also provided the teacher with an additional job to do--in order for them to really be a help to her, she had to supervise them and tolerate their sometimes disruptive behavior. It is interesting to note, however, that both Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Mercer intensely disliked the idea of doing without aides; in fact, Mrs. Mercer believed her students could never do as well as they did if she did not have the assistance of one or two aides.

Parents of the children who attend the Harriet Tubman School want the same things for their children that all parents want. They want their children to learn to read and write well, to achieve in school, and to, at the least, graduate from high school. Their want in this regard is intensified by the belief that "Black survival depends on education," i. e., being able to, at a minimum, read and write Standard American English well. They rely on the school to provide their children with the tools they need to succeed in our society. And they are more helpless in this regard than their middle-class counterparts because, for the most part, they did not do well in school.

It is important to note that there is a direct match between the values espoused by the community and those prevalent in the school. This finding is more significant when you consider the fact that the community and the school were studied by two different researchers, researchers who seldom compared notes. Our intentions were to compare notes frequently, but it happened that we seldom did. The reports were done separately and later meshed. So it is doubtful that one person's thinking colored the thinking of another's. I think this factor adds to the validity of the findings.

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